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LETTERS  
ON  
MATERIALISM  
AND  
HARTLEY'S THEORY  
OF THE  
HUMAN MIND.

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LETTERS  
MATHEMATICS



OF THE  
MUSEUM

*Eloza Giffard - Netherquis Flintshire 1807*  
L E T T E R S

ON  
MATERIALISM

A N D  
HARTLEY'S THEORY

*K*  
OF THE  
H U M A N M I N D,

ADDRESSED TO  
DR. PRIESTLEY, F. R. S.

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"He who does not foolishly affect to be above the failings of humanity, will not be mortified, when it is proved that he is but a man."

*Preface to Priestley's Experiments on Air.*

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L O N D O N:  
PRINTED FOR G. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, AND  
M. SWINNEY, BIRMINGHAM.

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M,DCC,LXXVI.

LETTERS

MATERIALISM



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T O  
THE REVEREND DR. PRIESTLEY,  
SO JUSTLY ADMIR'D  
FOR HIS EMINENT ABILITIES AND  
INDEFATIGABLE LABOURS,  
IN EVERY LEARNED AND VALUABLE  
PURSUIT :  
TOWHOM NATURE HATH KINDLY UNVEIL'D  
HER HIDDEN MYSTERIES,  
WHILST SHE FONDLY MARKED HIM FOR  
HER OWN HISTORIOGRAPHER ;  
THE FOLLOWING LETTERS,  
AS THEY ARE ADDRESSED,  
SO ARE THEY,  
WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,  
INSCRIBED,  
BY HIS SINCERE ADMIRER,  
AND MOST OBEDIENT,  
HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

*Winsley, August 12, 1776.*

THE REVEREND BISHOP  
TO THE HONORABLE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED  
I HAVE THE HONOR  
TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RECEIPT  
OF YOUR LETTER OF THE  
10TH INSTANT RELATIVE  
TO THE PROPOSED  
AMENDMENT TO THE  
ACT RELATIVE TO THE  
MARRIAGE OF  
THE POOR  
AND TO INFORM YOU  
THAT THE SAME HAS  
BEEN CONSIDERED  
BY THE COMMITTEE  
AND THAT THEY  
ARE OF OPINION  
THAT THE SAME  
SHOULD BE  
PASSED  
WITH THE NEAREST  
CONVENIENCE  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE GOVERNOR  
AND MOST OF THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE AUTHOR

THE REV. BISHOP

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T H E

C O N T E N T S.

L E T T E R I.

*INTRODUCTION,* — — Page 1

L E T T E R II.

*Evil tendency of materialism, and its philosophical absurdity as held out by a writer in the London Review of September, 1775.* — — — — p. 16

L E T T E R III.

*Matter in every form incapable of mental operations.* p. 45

L E T T E R IV.

*Objections to the union system answered; and man's future existence demonstrated.* — — — — p. 69

L E T T E R V.

*A general view of Dr. Hartley's Theory.* — — p. 91

L E T T E R VI.

*The doctrine of instinctive principles reviewed and contrasted with Hartley's Theory.* — — — — p. 115

L E T T E R VII.

*Dr. Hartley's Theory defective in its too general application to the human mind.* — — — — p. 139

L E T.



C O N T E N T S.

L E T T E R V I I I.

*Remarks on the doctrine of Necessity as stated by Doctor  
Hartley.* — — — — — p. 162

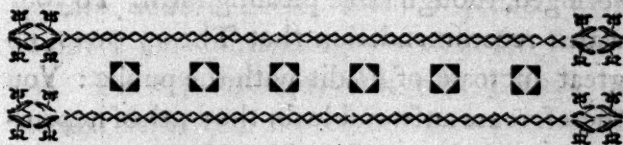
L E T T E R I X.

*The author's own ideas on the human mind, its powers and  
operations* — — — — — p. 195

L E T T E R X.

*Remarks on part of Dr. Priestley's preface to his 2d Vol. of  
Experiments on Air.* — — — — — p. 213

L E T -



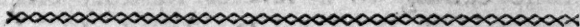
L E T T E R S

O N

M A T E R I A L I S M

A N D

HARTLEY'S Theory of the HUMAN MIND.



L E T T E R I.

REVEREND SIR,

THE liberty I take, in addressing this  
and the following letters to you, re-  
quires, I hope, no apology; because  
it is you, who have lately revived the almost  
antiquated notions of *Materialism*, and it is un-  
der your auspices, that Dr. Hartley's *Theory of*

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*the Human Mind* hath appeared in its present abridged, though more pleasing form. To your warm recommendation that Theory owes its great increase of credit with the public: You therefore are answerable for the truth of its principles; you are answerable also for any bad effects it may produce on the minds of its admirers. But should that system contribute to establish on a firmer basis the interesting cause of virtue and truth; it is but fair, you should receive the due tribute of praise, and that your brows should be now prepared for those laurels, which future generations will undoubtedly decree you.

The calling to a severer scrutiny either your own assertions, or Dr. Hartley's principles, will by no means affect their real merit; it must even contribute to enhance their lustre, value and importance. Error alone and falshood retire from the light; truth boldly presents itself, and hath nothing to fear from the most minute and rigid examination.

I am aware of the difficult task, I engage in, at least with regard to Hartley's theory;

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I am aware also of my own inability, which appears doubly great, when I reflect with whom I am contending——with Dr. Priestley. Yet my attempt, will not, I trust, be deemed either vain or presumptuous; it would be so, did I at all aim to put myself upon a level with you. My intention is, modestly to advance the sentiments of other able philosophers in opposition to yours, and where they seem to preponderate, freely to condemn your doctrine. Such a conduct can be never displeasing; it must even please *you*, for “all, who are enemies of *free enquiry*, are enemies of truth.” You well know the author of that observation. All acrimonious and ill-natured reflections shall be carefully avoided; because, I am sure, the cause of truth is not in the least thereby benefitted; though I might aptly enough instance the example of a man, who in a late *Examination* was very bitter. Still metaphysical subjects, naturally too dry, demand some little animation of style, consistent with decency and good-breeding.

It may be said with regard to the doctrine of *Materialism*, that you have barely expressed your thoughts in a dubious manner; that you

only suspected it might possibly be, that man was nothing more than organized matter, and consequently that his future existence in another state was to reason alone purely problematical. But whatever *your* internal sentiments may be; I know, your suspicions have by some men been raised into positive assertions, and from thence hath *Materialism* been by them adopted, as a tenet no longer to be controverted. Celebrity itself, Sir, becomes even hurtful to the possessor, when his bare doubts, or casual expressions, are by weak minds erected into axioms and first-rate truths. In points of mere speculation, it matters little what is either said or thought; but where the moral conduct of many is concerned, too great caution cannot be used. I am sensible, had you been aware, when you said, that "man had no hopes of surviving the grave, but what are derived from the scheme of revelation," that from thence one crime more would be committed in the world, or one act of virtue omitted, you would have been the last to have hazarded such an assertion, though you had judged it philosophically true: for we have been informed from unquestionable authority, that "your edu-

cation was so strict and proper, that the slightest immorality gives you a sensation, which is more than mental."—The question hath been asked; what could have been your motive in advancing an assertion, you knew *might* be productive of evil, and which also you knew was *most probably* false? You alone, Sir, are able to make a satisfactory reply. You have also been told, that when that assertion fell from your pen, you could not possibly have reflected, that Dr. Joseph Priestley had published *Institutes of Natural Religion*. The necessary connexion between a future state and natural religion is so palpable,—but of this more shall be said in due time.

You was not, I dare say, at all surprised, when you beheld the effects, that assertion produced on the minds of the public. It was a kind of electric shock, which instantly pervaded a wide and extensive mass, even of heterogeneous dispositions; and perhaps I may add with too much truth, that you smiled at the conceit of yourself being the prime conductor of so great a concussion. Even on the supposition, that the long adopted notion of *natural immortality* had been grounded on mere  
surmise



superstition or prejudice, the philosopher, who aims at being thought the friend to mankind, would not attempt to erase from the minds of the multitude a prejudice, which contributed to promote virtue and restrain vice, unless he were able in its stead to substitute a truth, which would infallibly tend, with greater success, to effect those two grand purposes. Tell me, Sir, what have you erected in the room of that barrier to vice, the certain prospect of a day of retribution, held out to us by reason, which you have laboured to overturn? The denunciations, indeed, of Revelation still remain firm and irrevocable; but where was the harm, that reason also should contribute some little to the same important work? Believe me, the good and the virtuous will never applaud your undertaking, and surely the Reverend Dr. Priestley would feel "a sensation next to shuddering," at the acclamations of the bad and the profligate. Pardon a reflection, which the love of virtue mechanically extorted from me.

In consequence of your notion of material souls advanced in the preliminary *essays* to Hartley's theory, and of the warm sanction,  
that

that notion received from the authors of the *London Review*, you was called to an account by Mr. Seton, who in a letter addressed to you in that periodical publication, warmly, though modestly, expostulated with you on its impropriety and evil tendency. It was natural to expect that so pertinent an address would have roused your sensibility, and extorted a reply. Nothing of the kind happened; unless we are to consider a letter, which appeared in the same *Review* of September last, as really Dr. Priestley's, and therefore as intended as the only and best reply to Mr. Seton's animadversions. 'Till I have it from unquestionable authority, I will never offer so flagrant an indignity to your so justly admired abilities, as to suppose you the author of it. But as no other answer hath hitherto appeared; nor have you, as your honour required, ever publicly reprobated that trifling and insidious production; we are authorized to esteem it yours; or, which nearly amounts to the same, to conclude that it came forth under your tutelage and kind protection. In this light I must therefore consider it; and shall with propriety make some remarks on its contents in the regular course of my correspondence.

Your

Your *Examination of the doctrine of instinctive principles*, maintained by the Drs. Reed, Beattie and Oswald, which you gave us in the course of the last year, I read with the greatest satisfaction; I was highly pleased to see a doctrine so triumphantly thrown down from its usurped empire, which had, within a few years, gained an astonishing ascendancy over minds, that should have been aware of its fallacy and erroneous principles. But doctrines of every denomination, however false and flimsy, when advanced with confidence and effrontery, will ever meet with friends and admirers. Notwithstanding the warmest approbation due to your performance, it was too evident from many incidental hints and expressions, that you meant to prepare our minds for some bold assertion, and that insinuations alone should not satisfy you.—As for your heterodox notions in theological matters, which it is well known you had long since adopted, and which you omitted not to mention in your *Examination*, they concern neither me, nor any man else. Your system, or (to use your own favourite expression) your *scheme* of faith, is no rule to me; nor do I mean at all to enlarge your contracted creed with



with any articles of my own, or of any other set of men. Let each one adopt that mode of faith, he thinks most rational and analogous to his own ideas and dispositions; nor let him therefore quarrel with his neighbour, who chuses to think otherwise. These are the true, and only true, reformation principles. —But when sentiments are advanced, closely connected with moral conduct, each man should take the alarm, if he sees the cause of virtue liable to be injured; he should do what lies in his power, to stem the progress of such baneful sentiments. It is in this disagreeable point of view I have considered your notions on *Materialism*, and the doctrine of *Necessity*.

On Dr. Hartley's *Theory of the Human Mind from the principle of the association of ideas*, which I mean principally to examine, because I esteem it an object of the greatest importance, I can now only observe, that I hope to be able to shew, that it is not true in its *universal* application, as exhibited by the Doctor and yourself. At the same time I hope also to demonstrate that your favourite Theory is little superior to the doctrine of *instinct*, with

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regard

regard to the chief objections alledged against the latter.

On your recommendation, I have perused Hartley with the greatest attention, of which I am capable. I am not even ashamed to say, that I have read him four times over. I soon perceived he was not an author to be run over in a few hours, *à tête reposée*, as the French express it; and as, from the first reading, I had entertained a design of contesting some parts of his system, it was necessary, I well knew, to consider it maturely. I now trust, I can say without vanity, that I understand him thoroughly. In his doctrine of *vibrations*, and therefore of *association*, I had been long initiated, from having read a French work, which appeared some years ago, (*Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'ame*) by Mr. Bonnet of Geneva. This ingenious and learned author, so well known in the literary world for his various and elegant productions in the Philosophical walk, sets out on the same principles as Dr. Hartley, but sensible of their almost infinite extent, if discussed *analytically*, only applies them to one of the human senses, the *smell*, and from thence

thence gradually rises, through a series of metaphysical enquiries and observations, to the most intellectual operations. From the same premises, it was natural these philosophers should draw the same inference: they infer that every mental process is a mechanical effect, and therefore that all *free election* in man is a chimerical and usurped prerogative; in other words, that man is no more a free agent in the real sense of the term, than the stone, I throw from me, which goeth, and then returns to the common center of gravitation.

The evil tendency and philosophical absurdity of this mechanical system, however high, even in point of moral influence, you and Dr. Hartley, with other Necessarians may raise it, I hope to be able to evince in a clear and satisfactory manner. Could any thing indeed induce me to believe the doctrine of mechanism, it would be this astonishing phenomenon in the world of man, that different rational beings, endowed with almost equal capacities, and whose minds may be supposed as little biassed by the force of vulgar prejudices, as may be, should still adopt, on the



very same subject, sentiments so diametrically opposite. It should seem, the fatal influence of heterogeneous *associations* is alone equal to such discordant effects.

From the doctrine of necessity, which seems the inevitable consequence of Hartley's and Bonnet's principles, if adopted in their *full extent*, I began to suspect some years ago, when I was almost an enthusiastic admirer of the Genevan philosopher, that such principles were not to be admitted with an implicit confidence. I knew falshood could never originate from truth, and I knew that man was free. Still I could never prevail on myself to anathematize principles, so justly analogous, in many respects, to the phenomena of the human mind: by them alone was laid open the wide field of *sensations, sensible ideas, memory, imagination*, and every other mental evolution, wherein it was not necessary for man to *act*, or to be denominated a *free agent*. No other system, either of Descartes, of Malebranche, of Leibnitz, or even of Locke, was half so satisfactory. If then I should be able to preserve Dr. Hartley's principles, as far as may be requisite, and withal maintain the grand prerogative



tive of man, *liberty*, I shall be more than amply rewarded for the many hours of close application I have given to the subject. But rather than resign my freedom, I am ready to immolate at her shrine the most dear and fascinating schemes of a Hartley, a Bonnet, or even a Dr. Priestley. You will laugh, I know, at my wild enthusiasm; but why should you, if it be the *necessary* result of the associated system of my brain?

Some have lamented, as Professor Beccaria of Turin is said to have done, not long since, over the ruins of Dr. Franklin, that he had quitted the stable world of nature for the fluctuating one of politics; they lamented that, you also had deserted the once favourite pursuits of experimental philosophy, and had entered on the dry, and comparatively uninteresting, scenes of the metaphysical world. It appears, however, that such apprehensions are groundless; for we still continue to be entertained and improved by your physical discoveries, not less perhaps, than if your mind had not been turned to other disquisitions. I wish we could say as much in favour of Dr. Franklin;

lin; but alas! how aptly may we now apply to him those verses of Horace to Iccius,

- - - Quis neget arduis

Pronos relabi posse rivos

Montibus, ac *Thamesim* reverti,

Quum tu cœmptos undique nobiles

Libros - - - Socraticam et domum

Mutare loricis - - -

Pollicitus meliora tendis

I allow with you that, speculations on such subjects, as Dr. Hartley hath treated, tend greatly to enlarge the mind, by filling it with ideas, so noble, and so far elevated above the level of common life and manners. Yet in such pursuits great moderation is requisite, lest the mind too freely rove, and idly indulge itself in the airy wilds of fancy, to the neglect of real science and useful improvement. Many are inclined to think that the public, in general, is more indebted to Dr. Priestley for his physical discoveries, than for all he either hath done, or may continue to do in his metaphysical, or even *religious* enquiries. But in these, as in all things else, each one judges according to his own ideas and attachments.

If

If it should be asked, why I have chosen to communicate my remarks in separate letters, I can assign no other reason, than that such a mode of conveyance pleased me best. I address them to you for the reasons before assigned, and because by thus having you continually in view, I shall be in less danger of digressing from the points, I propose to examine. They are only such, as appeared chiefly exceptionable, in your preliminary essays, and in Dr. Hartley's theory, as it stands in your late edition of that work. I mean to be as concise, as possibly I can, and as clear, as such intricate and mysterious questions will allow: it should however be remembered that, metaphysical disquisitions necessarily rise above the level of common observation and experience.—Farewel.

Feb. 29, 1776.

LETTER

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

THE doctrine of *Materialism*, in whatever light considered, hath an unpleasing aspect, and the effects it produces, if it produce any, must be ever of a more or less deleterious quality. It may be viewed either as the system of the libertine, or of the philosopher. The libertine adopts the notion of matter being the sole existing substance, that he may thence infer that he himself is nothing more than an organized machine, and therefore that the powers of death to him are infinite, whose sway reaches to every being of the creation. He says, the strength of death is indiscriminately exerted in mouldering into one common heap of dust, the *whole* remains of an oyster or a Newton. This he hopes will be the end of all things; at least his favourite system tells him, it may be so.—The philosopher, who with you, in innocence of heart, embraces *Materialism*, is inclined to it from the reflection, that a being of infinite



nite power might have endowed a mass of matter, such as the brain in man, with such exquisite powers, as should be sufficient to produce all the phenomena of *mind*, from the simplest sensation to the most complex and exalted intellectual operation. He is not alarmed at the thought, that on this supposition, the whole man *naturally* becomes extinct at death, because he hath been taught "to found all his hopes of a future existence on the Christian doctrine of a *resurrection from the dead*." This, nearly in your own words, is an epitome of your belief on this subject, or at least of what, you are "rather inclined" to believe. But, should this be the case; on what is the poor philosopher to rest his future expectations, who either, like a Socrates of ancient times, hath not been instructed in the *scheme* of revelation, or who, at this meridian period, hath so far divested himself of vulgar prejudices, and dared to think, as to place even that scheme in the common groupe of human and fallible inventions? Such a one must despondently surrender every thought of surviving the grave, because his reason tells him, he is of some "uniform material composition," and that such a composition

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must

must finally cease, when its component parts are disunited in death.—The firm believer therefore of the Christian dispensation should feel, even on the score of *Materialism*, the strongest incitements to gratitude; and we now see, why Dr. Priestley should be additionally grateful, for having been “so strictly and properly educated.”—As the first species of *Materialism*, just described, is too shocking to find many admirers, or at least, as it is not that, you have countenanced, I shall pass it by, and only consider that, relatively innocent, sentiment, which you, as some of your friends emphatically expressed themselves, have *dared* to advance. You see, Sir, I am disposed to treat you in the most ingenuous and friendly manner. Yet of this doctrine also the dangerous and evil tendency to me is evident.

From the most authentic histories, ancient and modern, of all nations, even of the most barbarous and unenlightened, it appears, that the notion of *some* future state, to be perpetuated after death, had universally diffused itself, and been deeply impressed on the minds of men. What may have been the particular  
sentiments

sentiments of some great geniusses, I care not; for all ages have had their *dissenters* from the popular belief; nor does that circumstance at all invalidate the general fact. Whether this dogma originally emanated from divine inspiration, and so was a part of the primitive religion communicated to our first progenitors, or whether it was a truth of a natural order, easily discoverable by the light of reason, can not at this distance of time be determined. Which ever was the case, you have told us in your *Institutes of Natural Religion*, that the belief of a future state is *now* to be ranked in the class of *unrevealed* truths, and it is to you, Sir, that I address myself. —For my own part I am strongly inclined to think it the result of human investigation, from considering, how imperfectly the doctrine of future existence is delivered in the revealed word of the old testament, if even it be at all to be found there; and consequently the general belief could hardly have sprung from that obscure source. The silence of those divine volumes on this important head is, you know, by many able men supposed to argue a previous belief of futurity generally established, and therefore any scriptural men-

tion of it became unnecessary. But if that belief was originally theodidactic, it was derived from oral inspiration, never preserved in writing; yet why was it not preserved, if unassisted reason could never arrive to the probable knowledge of a state, the belief of which is, on all hands, allowed to be so intimately interwoven even with our present happiness? Suffice it then to know that, mankind had adopted the notion; a notion, which the founder of the Christian faith came principally to establish on a firmer basis, to point out its proper object, and to lay open the means, by which the possession of lasting happiness in that state might be secured. He saw how much the general faith had, in the long course of many, ages been clouded over and corrupted by the influence of vice, and ignorance, and folly; how much the prospects of another world, by the wild fancies of the poets and inventions of idle men, had been loaded with ludicrous scenes of happiness or misery; he knew also the attempts that had been made by the scholars of the Materialist Epicurus and others, to eradicate the faith of a future existence from the breasts of mankind. To reform these abuses, and to fix  
the



the belief of futurity upon the more immovable basis of divine authority, was a principal motive for the coming of the Messiah. But then his design was not to cast away every other proof; he meant to enlighten and to add greater strength to, but not to invalidate the dictates of reason.

If your reasoning be just, that because revelation hath secured our immortality, therefore all other proof of it is superfluous and nugatory; it follows also, that all the points of *natural religion* are to be disregarded, because the Christian dispensation hath enlarged our faith, and taught us a more perfect code of laws. But then, Reverend Sir, the hours you gave to the compilation of your *Institutes* were spent indeed to little purpose. However the fact is, that neither natural immortality, nor the precepts of the natural law in general, are made void by the light of Christ; they are thereby additionally confirmed, and from thence in a double capacity can challenge our belief, and practical obedience.

What opinion would you be willing we should form of the man, who, with all the gravity

gravity of philosophy, should tell us, and assert it as his sentiment, that the existence of a supreme being, as drawn from the arguments of reason, was no more than probable, and that he was "rather inclined to think" there was no God; he might add, that his assertion could not alarm any one, because the Bible alone was a sufficient proof of his existence? Such a man, I think, though interiorly, perhaps, convinced of the probability of his opinion, could not by you or any one else be deemed over-prudent, or a particular friend to society. The reason would be, that such an assertion, grounded at the best only on probable argument, must be hazardous; as likewise that the belief of a God, of a just and wise superintending providence, was so greatly conducive to man's happiness, and to the encouragement of virtue and hindrance of vice, that it could not by every rational means be too strongly inculcated. But is it not equally evident, that the belief of futurity is deeply fraught with the same happy influence? If so, the philosopher who aims by any means to weaken that belief, may be justly considered in the light of the rash and misanthropic man just mentioned.

*Materia-*

*Materialism* is therefore of dangerous tendency, because it contributes to darken the prospects of futurity; because it unbinds the reins to vice, confirming the libertine and the unbeliever in their bad opinions and incredulity; it is therefore also inimical to virtue; finally it overturns the whole fabric of natural religion, because its injunctions can no longer be enforced, when the professors of it are told, that the same will be the ultimate fate of the virtuous and vicious — utter annihilation.

There was a time, Sir, when the religion of nature, that is, the religion, which reason unassisted by divine guidance, had promulgated, was the belief of nearly all the world; it is now also the only religion of many people and nations; and there are to be found, even in the heart of Christendom, men, who are rather inclined to reject all revealed principles, nor have we any reason to think, they are not serious, and rationally justified in their own minds in their professed incredulity. To these unnumbered multitudes of past ages and the present, to many of whom, it is much to be hoped, virtue was pleasing, and vice odious;

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had an apostle been sent from your school to announce the doctrine of *Materialism*, to tell them all must end with death, he would not, I think, have been kindly received; they would scarcely have decreed him a statue, as to their friend and benefactor.

There appears in your present behaviour a degree of inconsistency, not easily accounted for. It is this; that you, who are so gloriously busied in establishing the kingdom of *reason* over instinct, bigotry and enthusiasm, should wilfully destroy with one hand what you raise with the other. For if reason in every pursuit, natural and religious, is appointed to be our guide, as you are willing to make us believe, why should it be excluded from the single case of immortality? On the evidence of revelation, say you, is this article solely to rest. You are not fond, I believe, of blindly bowing to the mandates of authoritative power; for it seems you have erased from your creed, not only some of the thirty-nine articles, but also particular points, which are generally thought to be clearly contained in the written word of God. In this indeed you may act as you please; but you may not be  
incon-



inconsistent, and be blameless.—You may by this time be ready to tell me, that I am idly wasting myself in pure declamation, and that what I have said merits not the least attention from a philosopher, who is clearly persuaded that *Materialism* rests upon the strongest probable arguments, to say no more.—But still I should not be satisfied for the reasons above assigned, were this really the case.

You add, that the preacher, or timid moralist, may be alarmed at the imaginary view of evil to arise from the propagation of such a *truth*; yet that “we should never dissemble any truth, for fear of its consequences.” ---Let us then see what pretensions *Materialism* may have to be ranked amongst *truths*.

It hath been the opinion of some philosophers, and in particular of Mr. Locke, (though in this gentleman it seems to have been a passing doubt) that for any thing we can know to the contrary, *matter* might by the Deity be endowed with a capacity of thinking. Whether they understood that, this *capacity* or *faculty* of thought should be made to arise from matter, in the same manner, as

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do its common properties, and therefore be essential to it; or only, as Mr. Locke expresses it, that it should be *superadded* to matter, and therefore be considered rather as a distinct individual something, than as a property or even mode of matter, at present seems difficult to determine; nor is it indeed very material to know what their opinion was. With regard to yourself also it is not easy to investigate your precise meaning. Would you wish us to believe, Sir, that every species of matter, in every form and in all circumstances, does really think, that is, hath sensations, ideas, &c. in the same sense, as it possesses the ordinary properties of extension, solidity, &c? or do you restrain this privilege to certain systems of matter, of a particular organic construction, such as the brain in man and animals? The latter, I imagine, is your opinion. But, I own, when I read the passage, wherein this doctrine is advanced, (p. xviii. of your first essay) I am stupid enough not to understand it. The passage is: "So now that we see the laws and affections of mere matter are infinitely more complex than we had imagined, we may by this time, I should think, be prepared to admit the *possibility* of  
a mass

a mass of matter like the brain, having been formed by the almighty creator with such exquisite powers, *with respect to vibrations*, as should be sufficient for all the purposes above-mentioned (to generate all the modes of sensation and thought;) though the particulars of its constitution and mode of affection, may far exceed our comprehension." If you really then think that, every process, termed mental, in man, is in fact nothing more than so many distinct *nervous vibrations*, then I readily grant that matter may think, for undoubtedly every stretched cord, when touched, will vibrate; and I will farther grant, that a fiddle, in that sense may likewise be stiled a thinking substance. But if this be the case, it is idle to make such a fuss about it, and so seriously to require that the Deity should interfere in the construction of such a machine, or to tell us, that from the late discoveries made in chemical operations, we have now reason to conclude that matter is infinitely more complex in its properties, than was before imagined; since to produce any number or variety of *vibrations*, we can possibly desire nothing more than strings of a different length and thickness. These, with a proper

degree of tension, and arranged in a communicative order with one another, when moved by their respective plectrums, will produce all the phenomena of sensation or thought, from those of the humble emmet to the sublime contemplations of the renowned Dr. Priestley. A vibratory or tremulous motion, you know, must always take place, when a cord, whose constituent particles are not in actual contact with each other, is struck at either end, or otherwise agitated. In all this, certainly, there is nothing very wonderful, nor any necessity of suspecting matter to be gifted with extraordinary properties, of whose existence we just begin to be sensible.

It should appear then, that "you are rather inclined to think" something else; that you think—but, upon my life, I cannot discover either from the passage, I have cited, or from the whole tenor of your three essays, that your meaning can be possibly any other. Therefore that *thinking* is something more than a mere tremulous motion communicated to a nerve or a bundle of nerves, shall be shewn hereafter.—

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In the mean while I beg leave to turn aside, for a few minutes, to a gentleman, who, in the London Review of September last, made his appearance in quality of your Squire or Sancho Panza, and whose curious epistle may therefore be considered as containing a full delineation of his master's sentiment. You will not, I trust, from that ludicrous idea at all infer that, I mean to compare your Reverence to a knight errant; far be such an indecent thought from me; but I will add, and I design it for a serious compliment, that your late atchievement in so boldly assailing and utterly discomfiting the three Scottish tyrants, and rescuing from their iron hands the beautiful damsel, they had ravished and confined, was a work, not to be paralleled in the annals of the knight of the woeful figure.

As your friend professes to enter upon his enquiry "on the grounds of *physical experiment and observation*," I will endeavour to follow him through all his curious researches. Never, I believe, was naturalist so unnaturally engaged!—I allow then, in reply to his first question, that therefore I entertain the notion that man is composed of two substances, so essentially

essentially different as body and spirit, because I see him capable of acting in a *voluntary* manner, of which mode of action *inanimate* bodies I judge to be incapable: the action of such bodies I also judge to be a mere mechanical effect.—He then asks, from whence *animation*, and the *power of volition* are derived? And, not pleased with the common idea, of their springing from an annexed substance, of a nature totally different from matter, resolves the knot, by asking another question; whether the most *inanimate* and *unorganized* bodies are altogether so inert and passive, as that by proper organization they may not be capable of acquiring the power of volition, *i. e.* the power of being affected by motives not merely mechanical? That is, in other words, whether matter, in a disunited and unorganized state, totally divested of all animation and power of volition, but barely capable of action and re-action, may not by the mere *juxta-position* of parts, rise into life, and begin to act from the influence of moral motives? I will answer for it, no metamorphosis of Ovid, of men and women into trees and rocks, or even of dragon's teeth into men, was half so wondrous and incredible; though

though the last example bears some resemblance to it. He endeavours to illustrate this strange transmutation by adding, "that before the invention of clocks and watches, or other machines, it must have appeared as incredible that bits of brass or steel could ever, by any combination, be brought to indicate the hours, &c. as it is now to us, that morsels of aliment can acquire by organization the power of voluntary motion. The first was effected, why may not then the second? ---I blush to repeat such puerilities. Does he not reflect that, in the first case, a peculiar combination of parts is alone sufficient; but in the second, that the morsels of aliment, besides a new arrangement, must also conjure up new powers of feeling, of thought, and of volition, whereof, as he allows, no seeds are to be found in their unorganized dishabille. For the future where will be the difficulty in conceiving, that something may in a like manner arise from nothing? It is not therefore merely because we do not understand how such a power can be conferred, by bare apposition, on matter that we recur to an imperceptible adjunct to explain the faculty of *volition*, as your metaphysical friend seems



seems shrewdly to fancy, but chiefly, because the sole supposition of such a mysterious change is marked with the broad characters of *palpable absurdity*.

With pleasure I accompany your disciple in his next remove, and applaud his philosophy, as long as he is satisfied with asserting that, matter is not that inert, passive something, possessed of nothing but of length, breadth, and thickness, as generally represented. Matter, in all its parts, I allow to be as *active*, as he can possibly desire. I will even go farther, and assert that, if matter is not active, it is nothing; for a substance, purely passive, would be at best a useless and unnecessary lump in the creation; and a supposed *positive* really made up of *negatives*, could scarcely, I think, by the most subtle logician be raised above the line of non-entities.---Thus far then we both agree. But when he tells me that, the *necessity* of introducing into man an immaterial substance or spirit arose from the notion of all matter being *essentially* inert, I must beg leave to *dissent* from him.---You will applaud me, Sir, for that step.---Some writers indeed have adopt-  
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ed that amongst other arguments; but no one, that I recollect, ever rested his reasoning against the *Materialists* solely on that precarious footing. Philosophers, who view the whole material world, as by the hand of infinite wisdom impregnated with life and action, have always considered such reasoning as flimsy and highly insufficient.

To this point we have advanced gravely enough; but a few lines further, when speaking of the opposition caused by two bodies meeting in adverse directions, he says, "such an opposition may not improperly be called a *mechanical species of perception*," or, "that two inanimate or unorganized bodies, in collision, *perceive* the presence or force of each other;" I defy the callous fibres of the most gloomy metaphysician not to dissolve in laughter. It is however unkind barely to allow them this curious species of *perception*, and at the same time refuse them all *irritability*, or powers of feeling pain or pleasure: but this, he adds, is owing to the want of a nervous system, in consequence of which, "they can neither see, hear, smell, nor taste each other." Still as he continues to resolve

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their *perceptive* powers into a species of universal *touch*, (by the bye there can be no touch without irritability) who can tell, how far they may be swayed by passions in the various modes of percussion from various bodies? By a hard and uncouth blow they may be roused into all the horrors of rage, or be softened into the charms of love by the gentle pressure of some fair hand.—But I must beg you, Sir, to clear up one difficulty for me relative to this ingenious system. As your friend gives perception to bodies in collision or contact, yet denies them all nervous system, by what means, do you conceive such perception is generated? Evidently not by *vibrations*, because there is no fibre to vibrate: In what manner then? The solution of this problem might perhaps lead to greater discoveries, than is at first suspected: it might even greatly contribute to overthrow the whole structure of Dr. Hartley's vibratory scheme

*Animation* is always understood to give the power of feeling, but not *actual* feeling, in circumstances, where the organs are either disordered by sickness, or locked up in sleep; but

but in the latter state our feelings are often very exquisite. At all times, however, when man may be supposed to be in a state of *in-sensation*, then this shrewd metaphysical naturalist insists, that he is not different from a clock or any other mechanical automaton. If he only means to say, that whilst he does not actually feel, he is insensible, I freely grant all he can desire. But in such a state man cannot be justly compared to a watch; because, remove the obstacles to sensation, and he will begin to feel; which proves at all times his superiority to the mechanical automaton. The animal functions will, I own, soon cease, if sensation be long suspended; because those powers seem to have been made mutually dependent of each other: an animal, whose bodily functions should continue to act, and who at the same time should be permanently insensible, would be indeed a very useless and lumpish being. Such a being, by my consent, your friend might freely rank in his favourite class of automata.—What he means to prove from the example of some insects, living and moving after the loss of their heads, I cannot pretend to say: Indeed the whole passage is so very

obscure and desultory, it has quite exhausted my patience.—At length he reverts to the old marvellous story, that from the mere combination of elements, simply resisting and unconscious, may arise “the faculties of sensation, perception, reflexion, and *will*, the test of all the others.” “It was not therefore without reason, adds he, that Hobbes and some others have imputed an *imperfect* sense or perception to particles of unorganized matter.” What say you to this again, Doctor? Will you allow *perception*, where no vibratory motion can be raised?—The mere citation of such *bizarre* conceits is an ample refutation of them.

Now for the first time our author begins to blush. “They, says he, (Hobbes and his associates) went too far, indeed, in calling it (the *imperfect sense*) a *consciousness*; as consciousness implies a species of self-knowledge, that is obtainable only by a comparison between the percipient body and the body perceived; which is not to be obtained by the faculty of *simple perception*, but only from reflexion, or the faculty of comparing different perceptions with each other, of which it is

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not pretended inanimate corpuscles are capable. At the same time it does by no means follow, that a combination of such corpuscles may not form a conscious and intelligent compound." *Bravissimo!*

For my part now, I own, I cannot see wherein Mr. Hobbes is reprehensible: for, where there is *perception*, there certainly is *consciousness*; otherwise it becomes *perception unperceived*. But whatever he may establish with regard to the unconsciousness of his individual elements; he should not forget, that in collision or contact, (and in the present system of universal gravitation it is very difficult for a body not to be in contact somewhere or other) according to his own philosophy, all bodies must be strictly *conscious*. This affection, indeed, he maintains, is only attainable by a comparison between the percipient body and the body perceived; but he has just before determined, "that two inanimate or unorganized bodies, in collision, *perceive* the presence or force of each other." If this *mutual perception* is not enough, on which to ground a fair comparison; why, such bodies must be stupid indeed!---One thing more  
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in the above passage I must not pass by, because, I sincerely hope, you will severely chastize him for his inattention. He has the audacity to assert, that *consciousness* is not attainable by the faculty of *simple perception*, but only from *reflexion*; when at the same time, he knows, or should know, that both you and Dr. Hartley have established *simple perception*, as the only real affection, of which the human mind is susceptible. This one faculty, you maintain, comprises the powers of sensation, reflexion, memory, will, understanding, &c.---If now, to make matters even, you would agree with him in ascribing *perception* to sticks, and stones, and plumb-puddings; and he adopt your sentiment of perception being the sole and universal modification in the sensitive and reasoning line of beings; then, Sir, what a charming scene would rise before us! Blocks of marble and lumps of clay conscious of existence, and reasoning on the powers of percussion, or nature of elasticity, or general laws of motion!

Come we now to a passage equally curious, if not more so than any as yet mentioned. It is a definition or description of thought. "That thinking,

thinking, observes our Naturalist, is nothing more than the sense or perception, which our *internal organs* entertain, of the difference or relation, between the different perceptions of the *external organs*, has nothing in it inconsistent or contradictory; and that, what we call *mind*, as Dr. Priestley justly observes, is nothing more than the system of our *internal organs*, is equally consistent." Both equally consistent truly! and what may also rank in the same line of *consistency* is, that your friend and philosopher professes to advance in his enquiry, "solely on the grounds of physical experiment and observation."---Whilst you, Sir, perhaps, are more pleasingly engaged, really as a naturalist, in examining the effluvia of a bit of charcoal, or those of a rotten mouse, I will just dissect this curious description of thought, and lay its members before you.

The *internal organs* are the brain; the *external ones*, the five senses, of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling. The brain hath its perceptions, proper to itself: the five senses have also each their appropriated perceptions. *Thinking* then is barely the perception,

ception, the brain entertains of the difference subsisting between the perceptions of the senses, or of the relation, that may be amongst them. For instance, the nose perceives a smell, and at the same time the tongue perceives a taste; the brain perceives the difference or relation betwixt these two perceptions: that perception in the brain is *thinking*. But if this be so; the brain never thinks about what passes within its own regions; it merely busies itself in the concerns of the senses. Yet, you know, what a bustle both you and Dr. Hartley make concerning all sensations being conveyed up to the brain, which alone you will have to be the seat of all affections. The senses you conceive as so many inlets.---Our naturalist hath omitted to inform the public, whether, as each sense perceives, it is not also a brain, in its own little way, and consequently thinks: that is, each sense thinks about the perceptions of its brother senses. About its own it cannot, by virtue of the definition. It may likewise, occasionally, take a peep at what is going on above stairs in the brain. The difficulty is only to conceive how they get their information. I suspect not without passing through the



the brain; and if that be the case, the brain may at once as well be made the only seat of thought; as it undoubtedly would never let the organ *smell* go through to enquire, what was *perceived* in the organ *touch*, at the great toe, without strictly informing itself of each particular perception.

As then this new system of thought seems to have been formed in haste, and to be incomplete, it would be more adviseable for its fabricator to call it home for the present, and return it to the public with large additions and emendations.—How far you may be consistent in determining the *mind* to be nothing more than the *system of internal organs*, shall be considered in due time. At all events, the applauses of so extraordinary a genius, as the Naturalist, on whom I am animadverting, must be very flattering to a man of nice sentiment and honour.

He is still resolved to push on his physical researches: he adds; “The absurdity of supposing a simple unorganized being capable of thinking is flagrant; if it thinks, it must necessarily have previously acquired an idea,

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or object of thought. It cannot think about nothing, and ideas are to be acquired only by means of the organs of sense." Never, I believe, was such flagrant nonsense uttered by a man, who hath the smallest pretension to the name of a philosopher! By what metaphysician was it ever asserted, that the soul of man may think, independently of all corporeal concurrence? In its present state of union, it hath organs sufficient for every species of thought: viewed as a distinct or insulated substance, it is gifted with powers of acting, but their exertion is dependent of the body. In this light the philosopher contemplates the human soul.

Were it not too rigid to require of such a writer, that his *internal organs* should connect the contents of one page with another, I would beg him to compare the last passage with the description of thought, we have just examined. According to that description, the work of thinking commences, as soon as the brain perceives the perceptions of the senses, that is, as soon as the senses perceive; these perceive, as soon as impressions are made on them; therefore the brain must  
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begin to think before it can have acquired an idea or object of thought.—The whole mystery is that, in thinking, ideas and the perception of them are a simultaneous or concomitant process.

I beg to be excused from any farther examination of this curious epistle. In my remarks on the passages above cited, I might have been much fuller and explicit, but, I trust, enough has been said. Indeed, had not that letter been cried up as a master-piece of metaphysical composition, I should never have thought it worth my while to trouble either you or myself with any criticism upon it. How groundless and even false the report was, which gave it to Dr. Priestley, as its author, I am now clearly convinced. But you certainly, Sir, should have publicly disowned it.—It contains other things, which, it may be said, I should not have neglected. Some of them are foreign from my present object; others are merely supposed confirmations or illustrations of the main assertion, extracted from the lucubrations of the *Monthly Reviewers*. Whatever else there may be

worth notice will fall under general consideration in the course of my observations.

My object in this letter was to point out the bad tendency of *Materialism*, as also to shew that, nothing can be more absurd than that doctrine, as exhibited by its warmest admirers. Should it be said that some of my reflexions are too acrimonious; my reply is that, writers, whose sole aim is to delude and impose, merit the severest treatment. Or I will say, which perhaps may be more pleasing to your fellow-labourer in philosophical experiment, that by the perceptions of his internal organs such correspondent perceptions were raised in mine, that I was positively *necessitated* sometimes to be angry, and sometimes to laugh.—Farewell.

P. S. I take this occasion to acquaint your ingenious friend, that a minute description of the apparatus, by which he made his singular observations and experiments on the nature of thought, &c. would be most gratefully received by an inquisitive public.

March 6.

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## LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,

HAVING shewn in my last letter, in a manner, I think, you cannot altogether disapprove, that *Materialism* in every acception is fraught with a dangerous tendency; as also that it is philosophically absurd, in the light it hath been represented by its greatest admirers; I must now pursue my chain of ideas, and endeavour to demonstrate that, abstracting from any absurdity derived from its mode of representation, it is necessary to admit in man, besides the brain, a substance totally different from it. On this hackneyed, but still interesting, subject, I greatly wish it were in my power to advance any thing, that might please, either in point of matter, or mode of expression; but that, I fear, is impracticable. We seem long ago, on some subjects,

subjects, which lie out of the reach of physical investigation, to have arrived at the term, fixed to human enquiry. This thought, however, too favourable to indolence, and obstructive to discovery, will not be readily admitted by the philosopher, who considers *truth* in general to rise in an infinite progressive series, and who also flatters himself that the powers of genius are analogously proportioned to it. The idea is grand and pleasing, but I have my suspicions, that there are certain barriers, which in this life man may never pass.

To fix myself more closely to the subject, I must beg leave to extract from your first *Essay* the remarkable passage, which hath already been so often copied, and so much talked of. “ I am rather inclined to think, say you, that though the subject is beyond our comprehension at present, man does not consist of two principles, so essentially different from one another, as *matter* and *spirit*, which are always described as having not one common property, by means of which they can affect or act upon each other; the one occupying space, and the other not only not occupying

pying the least imaginable portion of space, but incapable of bearing relation to it; inso-much that, properly speaking, my mind is no more *in my body*, than it is in the moon. I rather think that the whole man is of some *uniform composition*, and that the property of *perception*, as well as the other powers termed *mental*, is the result (whether necessary or not) of such an organical structure as that of the brain."—The discussion of the matter contained in these lines will afford, I suspect, ample subject for the letter, I am engaged in.

If it can be proved that solitary matter is incapable of producing the mental phænomena, it at once becomes necessary to admit the existence of a substance, distinct from matter. This I must now attempt.---*Matter* may be considered either in its elementary detached principles; or in a state of cohesion, as in bodies in general; or as formed into a regular and organized system. But in these three states it is equally unsusceptible of mental powers or operations. By these *powers* and *operations* I understand, what is generally meant, the faculties of sensation, perception, reason-

reasoning, and voluntary motion. The terms *powers* and *operations* I shall use indiscriminately.

The elemental particles, of which all bodies are composed, may be considered either as *homogeneous*, or as *heterogeneous*; as simple monads, uncompounded and indivisible, or as compounded, and ever divisible. Though the idea of homogeneity and eternal divisibility to me appear highly absurd and unphilosophical, and consequently the opposite notion of elemental unity and variety, in an ascending and descending scale, to be adopted, when it is necessary to determine for either side of that once much litigated question; in the present dispute it will suffice to shew that, such elements in every sentiment are incapable of receiving mental faculties. Indeed there are few *Materialists*, I believe, so sanguine as to extend the privilege of thought or feeling to those embryo beings; yet perhaps they are not sufficiently aware, that nothing contributes so much to the firm establishment of any system as the cautious securing of the basis, on which it is meant to be erected. Either then each individual element must be  
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gifted with the powers of thought; and so matter, through its almost infinite range, be capable of thinking; or else this surprising faculty must be restrained to a determinate number of them. But in either case, such beings, if supposed *simple*, according to my philosophy, will be just so many individual minikin thinkers: nor, on this supposition, will it be matter that thinks; because matter, in every sentiment, is a compounded substance, whereas such elements are uncompounded.— If these elements be not simple, but divisible for ever and ever; it then seems impossible that they should ever possess the powers of perception, or indeed any other property whatever: for where can a faculty be made to reside, when the substance designed to receive it, does not so much as enjoy *individual* existence? But that the faculties of thought or perception cannot adhere to a compounded being shall be rendered more palpable, when we come to view bodies a little more fixed and substantial, than are first principles or elements.

Nothing then, it appears, can be determined relative to the perception or imper-

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ception of the material elements ; because in one case, if they perceive, they are found to be so many *souls* ; and in the other, they seem quite destitute of every thing. Yet this point most undoubtedly should be fixed before we advance in our enquiry ; for as all bodies, even the most perfectly organized, are a collection of particles, and can possess nothing but what the parts have, and is derived from them, you will find it, I suspect, very difficult to maintain the ground, you have so daringly seized, unless this preliminary point be settled. Therefore, Sir, now is the moment to determine. Either the component elements of bodies, as such, are endowed with the high powers of perception, or they are not : they are barely gifted with those properties, which are necessary for them, to carry on, in a more humble, but not less useful, way, the business of material agents, in producing the various effects and various phenomena of nature ?—But I see you are rather inclined to think, that only aggregates or bodies are equal to perception ; and among these, such only, as have received a particular organical structure, as the brain in man and animals, or perhaps some parts of vegetables,

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nearly approaching to the brainy substance. However, to proceed in order, I must say something on bodies in general, because I mean to leave no outlet, by which the subtle *Materialist* may escape. Indeed the gentleman, whose philosophy I criticised in my last, after the example of his friend Hobbes and some few others, hesitates not, you remember, to allow a species of what, he calls *imperfect sense* or *perception*, to all bodies, however gross and unorganized. Their system must not pass unnoticed.

If all bodies from the rugged rock down to the humble pebble, and even bits of un-vegetating wood, and lumps of clay, may be thought to feel or perceive, (the imperfection of the sense matters nothing) what idea are we to form of so wonderful a phenomenon?-- Rather than admit such a system, I should be inclined, for my own part, to enlarge the curious family of Cudworth's *plastic natures*, and allow one of them to each of the just mentioned substances. But it would be deemed cruel perhaps to confine aerial beings to offices, so tasteless and unamusing. Nor, on second thoughts, does it appear that, their closest at-

tention could at all be rendered serviceable. Let all bodies then perceive and feel for themselves, if they be able.

In the first place such perception is inadmissible; because no affection can be generated, where no nervous system is allowed to exist, and, according to the hypothesis, the species of bodies in question are unorganized. This reasoning, I am confident, *you will think just*.---Secondly, where in the body is this perception to reside? Either in all, or in some particular part: if in all the parts; there will be as many perceptions, as parts, which, according to some philosophers, are infinite. If in some one particular part; such part becomes a percipient individual: but such an individual is not the *whole* body; consequently the whole body does not itself perceive; which is however the grand *quæsitum*.

The first case, of all the parts perceiving, is additionally absurd, when we reflect that, infinite or many perceptions are ridiculously superfluous, where one will suffice; and, I suspect, a single perception in each stone or pebble



pebble would amply supply all their possible exigencies.---Thirdly, it is highly unphilosophical, it is even childish, to ascribe to any being a capacity or property, which evidently must be useless in the line of existence, it is destined to fill. But of what possible use to unorganized and inanimate matter can be any species of perception, unless thereby it become conscious of, and enjoy the sweets of existence? Yet, according to these philosophers, and your friend in particular, such bodies, even in the act of perception, "are incapable of irritability, of feeling pain or pleasure."—Believe me, Sir, it is not from any jealous or hard-hearted disposition, that I thus strenuously maintain the cause of positive insensibility against the material part of the creation: No, could reason allow it, I should be most sincerely happy, that every being partook of a blessing, which by communication is no-ways diminished: though I much fear, in the present prevailing system of things, could the stones, we tread on, feel, that the sum of their painful would far exceed their pleasurable sensations.---From what has been said, bodies, in general are incapable

of perception ; they are equally so in their most organized state.

In examining the sentiments of those, who widely differ from us, we are too often unhappily inclined to view every thing in a magnified, and therefore deceitful light. Thus each object becomes overcharged. Our own ideas appear to rise from the center of truth ; whilst those of the adversary wear a gloomy form ; we see them marked with the malignant character of error and falshood. If this be ever the case in controversial dispute, how cautiously should we be aware of the illusion, and always suspect those ideas most, whose features appear beauteous and smiling. On this head I have certainly no reason to fancy myself more privileged than my neighbours ; however it is something, to be sensible of the general weakness : and, with regard to the present debate, I am bold to declare that, if I am not on the right side, it is the last time, I will ever sacrifice one single moment of my future life to the discovery of *Truth*.

It is *impossible* then that a mass of matter, like the brain, could have been formed by the  
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almighty creator with such exquisite powers, as should be capable of *perception*. This is just the inverse of your own assertion. Positively to assert, what the Deity can or cannot do, is undoubtedly glaringly arrogant, unless some *absurdity* in the supposition be manifest: then to make that an object of divine power becomes not only insolent, but even blasphemous.

Preferably to every other mental affection, I shall now adopt that of perception; because, as has been already noticed, in your and Hartley's opinion, *perception* is every thing. Can I but once shew that perception is out of the reach of the brain, the whole business will be ended. By perception you understand that general affection, of which each one is conscious, when external objects act on his senses; or when ideas, bearing relation to such objects, again present themselves; or when we are busied in viewing those ideas, which are termed intellectual. In all such cases, we are said to *perceive*. This perception, which is commonly considered as an affection of the soul, brought into existence by vibrations excited in the medullary substance

stance of the brain, to which the soul is principally united, you determine to be a mere mechanical effect, the tremulous motion of a nerve, in nature no otherwise distinguished from the nerve itself, than as the ordinary vibration of an extended cord is distinct from the cord in motion. The almost infinite variety in our perceptions gives you no trouble, because you conceive the brain to be an instrument of the most exquisite structure, justly proportioned to, and susceptible of all possible impressions; as the air itself, for instance, is capable of transmitting different vibrations, even at the same instant of time, without limitation. As it cannot be otherwise, but that various *associations* must be gradually formed between the various vibratory motions of various fibres; this will explain, say you, all the different ideal affections, and all the mental phænomena. How useless indeed, on this supposition, is the existence of any substance in man superior to and essentially different from matter! And, could your hypothesis be ever satisfactorily demonstrated, the so long usurped dominion of that immaterial *something*, termed *soul*, would



would be thrown down, and itself be ignominiously levelled with the dust.

There is one thing, Sir, I almost forgot to mention : it regards the exquisite powers, you conceive, the brain may have received from its maker. Your meaning is not clear. You can scarcely fancy, when a brain is to be formed, that the almighty hand takes upon it the plastic function of uniting element to element, and then presents the whole with the exalted powers of perception. Were this the case, this privileged mass of matter, must never be allowed to change, either by parting with any of its primary constituent particles, or by acquiring new ones ; as every change would necessarily affect its perceptive abilities. The new acquired elements could be no other than the common plebeian particles of other bodies. Still if the brain be alone percipient ; that capacity must spring, either from a special grant, which cannot be understood ; or from its component parts in their origin and after-existence, being of a singular constitution, which is equally incredible, as the brain is nourished from the more subtle part of our aliment, and seems not to

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be of a texture different, in quality at least, from the spinal marrow, or the whole nervous system, which is known to be an expanded ramification of the brainy substance; or finally, it must be concluded, that the perceptive power is derived from mere organization: but then, why should the agency of an almighty creator be wantonly drawn in to form this brain, when nature, in her own laboratory, without any new acquired skill, is alone equal to the curious workmanship? It seemed proper to mention these difficulties, which arose in my mind, from the view of your very singular assertion. I must suppose, however, that you only mean to say that, from organization alone the brain acquires whatever perfection, it may have.

Let us now see what can be made of a tremulous motion, which you define perception to be. All bodies, as you observe, in a greater or less degree, are susceptible of such motion, when their constituent particles are not in actual contact. Strike them; a vibratory motion commences, and is propagated from part to part. The same thing takes place in a similar manner, when a nerve, in the hu-

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man body, is by any cause put in motion; the tremor begins at one extremity, and from thence passes to the other, terminating in the brain. There, perhaps, the motion may be diffused, and so communicated to other parts of the medullary system.

The question now is; why the latter species of tremulous motion should be *essentially* different from that, which is produced in the common class of bodies; that is, why the first motion should be barely motion, and why the second, besides its tremulous affection, should moreover be something so strangely wonderful, as is *perception* in your hypothesis? Where causes are similar, the effects should also be similar. To render the difficulty more striking, let it be supposed that a red ray acts upon its appropriated fibre in the eye; a tremulous motion is instantly generated, and sent up the fibre to the brain: the vibration in the brain you call the perception of a red colour. But most evidently, besides the mere mechanical vibration, another effect is here produced, very different from the motion, *i. e.* the perception of red. Or if you insist, that this last effect is really identified

to the first, and only imagined to be different from the precipitancy or weakness of our discerning faculties, or rather organs; What, Sir, can you make of the *sentiment*, which attends this perception of red, by which I know that the colour, I see, is red. This sense you will scarcely, I fancy, also resolve into the same tremulous agitation. And, that you may not fly to any associated affection, whereby to account for it; I will farther suppose the ray in question to be the first object, which strikes on the eye of a new-born infant: it shall raise the first perception, he hath ever experienced. Though the infant, for want of other ideas, will not be able to draw any comparison, or to know what it is, still he will *feel* he is affected; and this feeling must be something widely different from the vibratory motion in the nerve. ---To me it is clear then, that perceptions are something more than mere vibrations. But it will be said, that Dr. Priestley cannot possibly fancy them to be identified; and therefore that I am idly combating a notion, which had never any real existence. How true this insinuation may be, you, Sir, are best qualified to determine. I must proceed  
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to shew that, in man there are innumerable affections, to the forming of which the brain alone is unequal.

The capacities of feeling pain and pleasure, of perceiving the presence of ideas, sensual or intellectual, of comparing those ideas, and of judging betwixt them, joined to that conscious sentiment, which attends every mental affection, and of acting in a manner termed voluntary, are, besides many others, general modifications, whose existence is not controverted. If they be affections of the brain alone, and not to be found in any other bodies of the material world, it must be allowed, that they originate from some singular organization. Yet the most perfect organization is but the most perfect arrangement of material elements; and evidently, what gives but a new extrinsic relation of parts to parts, can never give capacities, which did not before exist. If such capacities exist, as it is granted they do, their existence must be founded in something. Modes and capacities are not self-existent; they are not substances. If they inhere in the brain, they participate of its nature; are compounded and divisible

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as it ; are of the same fluctuating and changeable quality ; in short, are the brain itself. But the brain is a body ; and bodies neither feel, nor reason, nor move progressively from a voluntary determination.

But could not the Deity have bestowed such extraordinary powers on a system of matter ? I answer, he could not : First, because the essences of things are eternal and independent ; they are what they are, and must ever be so. If *all* matter enjoys not the capacities in question, they are not essential to it : If matter be completely matter without them, the superaddition of such capacities will make the matter, which receives them, something more than matter, and consequently destroy its nature ; it will no longer be what it was, that is, matter. Therefore the brain, endowed with such capacities by infinite power, loses its nature of matter or body, and rises into a superior order of beings.

Secondly, the powers of perception are incompatible with composition of parts. Particular *feelings* might perhaps be conceived  
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## HARTLEY'S THEORY.

to arise in distinct nervous points, and so be manifold; but where can be placed that *something*, which unites these thousand feelings, and calls them *mine*? The perception of *cold* in one element or fibre, on your supposition, will be so separately distinct from the perception of *heat* in another, that in the whole man it can never be said, *I am sensible of feeling heat and cold*.--Unnumbered sensations, ideas, inclinations and passions in their turn arise within us. The brain, you say, is the seat of such affections. Either then they each individually occupy a particular part, or some one, superior to the rest, must within itself unite and comprise them all. One or the other must be. In the first case are made to exist as many individual *percipient* beings, as there are affections, but no where will be found that *conscious unity*, which ever accompanies each affection, or that central point, which assimilates to itself such various modes of being. In the second case, it is not the brain, which perceives.

Thirdly, "Judgment (it is your own definition) is the perception of the universal concurrence or the perfect coincidence of two ideas,

ideas, or the want of that concurrence and coincidence." These ideas, you suppose to reside in, or to be distinct vibrations of the brain. The judgment or perception, which views their agreement or disagreement, and finally pronounces on them, is itself distinct from the ideas, yet it sees them within itself: for were it not so, their concurrence could no more be perceived, than that of the internal ideas of another man a hundred miles distant. Judgment then cannot be the attribute of a compounded substance.

*Harmony* in music is said to arise from a number of modulated sounds; *proportion* also or symmetry in architecture from the appropriate arrangement of materials. But each sound taken separately is void of harmony, as each stone in a building is divested of all exactness and proportion. In the external objects *themselves* then what have we, but detached and insulated sounds, detached and insulated stones, only rising in a definite order of succession and co-existence? If this be so, what gives existence to the charms of harmony and proportion? I answer, that being alone, which gifted with percipient and comparing



paring powers, can take in such various tones and various parts; can compare them together, and thus perceive, accord and proportion. This exalted power, through the wide stretch of nature, is alone capable of giving existence to such unsubstantial forms. Harmony and symmetry are mere effects of comparison; all their reality is derived from man.

But if the brain were the sole substance, on which such impressions are formed, harmony would be eternally excluded from the world, or rather it would never have existed; for, on that supposition, a thousand distinct vibrations in the nervous system could no more give it reality, than it could be raised by the sound itself, confined to the external bodies, without any ulterior process. Were each particular sound to fall on the ear, and each part in an edifice on the eye, and there rest; What, Sir, do you think, would be the effect? Evidently only this, that the most regular and finished structure would remain a heap of sand; and the airs of an *Arne* be as unaffecting as the whistling of the wind. Just so would it also be, were your system

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the real system of nature : no center of union would then exist, and consequently no comparison or just perception ; therefore no harmony and proportion.

What has just been said is equally applicable to *truth* and *falsehood*. Truth, as viewed in the mind, is the perception of things *as they are* : the reverse of this is falsehood. But this also implies a comparison, or at least, a simultaneous perception of different ideas. Different ideas can be neither compared, nor perceived, where no simple point of union subsists ; which can never be found in a substance divisible and compounded.

Fourthly, To put this tedious matter, as far as may, past all possibility of doubt, though indeed enough has been said already, I will here copy a demonstration, which some months ago appeared in the literary journal, I have before mentioned. This I can do without any apology to its author, because, if I remember well, it is itself extracted from a French metaphysical work, intitled, *Institutions Leibnitziennes*. " Let the brain be supposed to consist of any number of elements : on this supposition, which is certainly admissible, 1. Either the whole brain will be conscious

scious of its existence in such manner, as that its component parts be unconscious of the same; which is a palpable absurdity; since the whole brain is only a collection of parts, and can itself possess nothing, but what is derived from them.---Or 2. of these elements each will be sensible of its own existence, whilst the whole brain remains insensible: but then the brain itself, the organic system in question, will be void of all conscious perception.---Or, 3. the internal feeling we are in search of, must be the result, the sum total of each individual sentiment; which is equally absurd, for each element is alone conscious of itself, it knows not the feelings of its kindred atoms: we shall have thus as many distinct perceptions, as elements; that is, each element will be severally conscious or perceptive of its own existence; nothing in the whole mass will be able to say, *I* am composed of elements, it is *I* that exist in a compounded and organic state: therefore the whole brain will not be conscious of its existence; yet does not Dr. Priestley perceive that he exists?---I have never seen any attempt made to invalidate the decisive force of this argument against *Materialism*.

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Lastly,

Lastly, the power of acting or moving in a manner termed *voluntary*, as granted to man, cannot be understood in your system. Organization alone can never give a capacity to the component elements of the brain or body, of which, in their unorganized state, they were totally void.

From all that has been offered, I draw this final consequence, that matter in every state is incapable of possessing the powers of perception and thought, either naturally, or by divine dispensation; and therefore that in man must exist a substance superior to, and essentially distinct from the brain.--- Farewel.

March 18.

LETTER



## LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,

**T**HE impotency of all matter to perform the mental functions, either by native energy, or by a grant from heaven, hath, I trust, been sufficiently evinced. But to introduce a quite new class of vibrations into a nervous system, by long use grown rather callous, is, I conceive, no easy undertaking: therefore, whether you will be inclined, from the view of my arguments, to desert your favourite *Materialism*, can only be known by the event. However, I have some faint hopes of your conversion from an idea, which this instant strikes me; which is, that when you published your *essays*, you was not absolutely clear, that the doctrine, you then hazarded,

zarded, was certainly true. And I have formed this opinion of your candour, that should it be made appear, you have inadvertently adopted an error, you will warmly seize the first opportunity, frankly to acknowledge it. So much, at least, you told the Scots Doctors, *you and the public* had a right to expect from them; and why should not the *public and I* be entitled to require the same acknowledgement from Dr. Priestley? His assertion, or *insinuation*, (take which name it will) I engage, will be esteemed as pernicious in its consequences, as the very worst of those from the northern schools.

From an impartial review of the subject, as stated in my letters, I flatter myself, you will be no longer disposed to maintain that, "our having recourse to an *immaterial principle* to account for perception and thought, is only saying, in other words, that we do not know in what they consist." Nor will you say, "that we have no more conception how the principle of thought can have any more relation to immateriality, than to materiality." ---We know not indeed, and probably never shall, either what perception and thought in  
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themselves strictly are; or how they are formed: but, as you have plainly seen, it is not from this ignorance, that we have recourse to an immaterial principle. It is likewise clear, that *thought* hath a greater relation to immateriality, than to materiality; because, in the material system, there can possibly be no such thing as thought: it must then arise in, and be related to an immaterial principle. There is no medium.

My opinion therefore is, with the world in general, that man does really consist of two parts, as essentially different from one another, as *matter* and *spirit*. These two are joined together in the strictest bonds of union. This union is the source of the most fertile and most wonderful harmony in nature. A substance, simple and *highly* active, sensitive, perceptive, cogitative and rational, is united to a being, compounded and *inferiorly* active, insensitive, imperceptive, uncogitative and irrational. From this surprising union arises a reciprocal commerce between the two substances, a sort of action and re-action, which constitutes the life of organized-animated beings. The nerves, so many ramifications  
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from the brain and spinal marrow, differently agitated by their various objects, communicate their vibrations to the brain: these impulses are answered by sensations and ideas in the soul, totally distinct from the cause, which appears to produce them.--Such is my general notion of man, as viewed in our present metaphysical medium.

Though it be no real objection to a well-established system, that difficulties may be raised against it, not easily answerable, or even not answerable at all; still to the minds of many, so long as such difficulties remain in force, the very doctrine they combat, appears problematical, or at least carries not with it that power of conviction, it may really merit. Yet, at the same time, where is the human system to be found, so clearly demonstrated, and fixed on intuitive principles, that against it have not been started many subtle and powerful objections? However, for my own satisfaction, and for the satisfaction of those few, who, besides your Reverence and myself, may be inclined to read these heavy metaphysical pages, I will here subjoin such replies, as seem to me best suited



to remove the difficulties, which by you and others have been so triumphantly urged against the doctrine of *immaterialism*.

You tell us, in the first place, "that *matter* and *spirit* are *always* described, as having not one common property, by means of which they can affect, or act upon each other."

---This may be true in the opinion of those philosophers, who consider all matter, as passive and inert, void of every species of force, action, or energy. But probably such negative attributes can scarcely constitute the nature of any being. In every sentiment indeed the properties of these two substances must in part, at least, *essentially* differ, because their natures are ever said to be dissimilar: Yet it does not hence follow, that they may not be endowed with powers, whereby mutually to affect and act upon each other. A being of a superior order may act on an inferior one; placed higher on the scale it hath acquired nobler properties; but is not therefore deprived of such inferior qualities, as are not unalliable with the more exalted species: particularly this must be the case, where the superior being constitutes a part of the same

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general system. Thus will the soul be able to act on matter, and consequently on its own body, which experience likewise seems to confirm.

Why may not matter also act upon spirit, at least the most exalted and refined part of matter, in a manner, perhaps inexplicable, but analogous to its inferior nature and powers? Thus reciprocally will the body act upon the soul. For this nothing more seems requisite, than that matter, in its component elements, should be possessed of an *active force*, justly proportioned to their order and rank of being. It must reside in the elements, and these must be *simple*; because no force could ever inhere in a substance ever divisible; and were not the elements active, their compounds never could be, no more than a percipient brain could arise from impercipient particles. The material elements then I conceive to be *simple* and *active*; active in various degrees, according to their scale of being, or the part, they are by infinite wisdom, destined to fill. The human body, a compound of these elements, and the brain particularly, must be conceived as an instrument,

ment, mounted in the most exact accord of parts to parts, and as endowed with the greatest energetic powers, of which body is susceptible. It is thus rendered a fit habitation for a substance, *simple and highly active*, as is the soul.

The soul, as a superior being, must have additionally other superior attributes, some of which may be roused into action by the impulse of the inferior agent, the body; whilst the more eminent (though not, from the pre-established laws of union, independent in their operations) are however out of the reach of any *immediate and direct* bodily action. Thus will the various mental powers be progressively brought into action, and man will feel, will perceive, will think, and will reason, just as the respective operative causes exert their influence,

In the system of *occasional causes*, (wherein all matter is supposed to be passive and lifeless, and wherein even the soul itself, though said to be active, never acts) the Deity is introduced as the only mover and real agent, but is represented as ever determined to act

by the view of the different states, in which he himself hath placed the external beings.--- The doctrine of *physical influence* is, in my opinion, the only philosophical notion : here the two substances mutually act and re-act upon each other.

To your second objection, "that properly speaking your mind is no more *in your body*, than it is in the moon ; because it is incapable of bearing the least relation to space," I answer : matter indeed occupies *space*, to which spirit hath no relation ; that is, matter, as a compounded substance, bears in its various parts a relation to other bodies. *Space* in itself is nothing *real* ; it is only an *ideal phenomenon*, arising from the extensive order of co-existing bodies. Take from the creation every body, or, which amounts to the same, every being capable of viewing them, and *space* will no longer subsist.

*Spirit*, a simple being, cannot bear *this same relation* to bodies ; but it may be *present* to them in a manner, easily intelligible. Presence in any space or place is attested by *action*. The more immediate this action is, the



the more immediate is the presence. I can act more immediately on the bodies in my chamber, than on those situated at the outside of my windows; to the first then I shall say, I am nearer placed, or more present. The most intimate presence is that of the soul to its body. On the body we seem to act (or at least on the brain) by an *immediate* exertion of force. With what propriety then can it be said that, my soul is no more in my body, than it is in the moon? In the moon it is not at all: I perceive my absence from that luminary, by there being no possibility of my acting on it, either immediately or mediately; but I feel my presence to my body, as also to other surrounding bodies, which I therefore call near to me, from the manner, by which I can act upon them. The more mediums any action must pass through, before it reaches its destination, the greater the distance, and *vice versa*.

Why may not the Deity be conceived to be present to all beings by that immediate action, whereby we are represented *to live, and move, and be*? What is possible to a finite simple being, such as the soul relative to its body, is certainly

certainly possible to an infinite uncompound-  
ed substance, and that without the gross  
anthropomorphitcal idea of diffusion or re-  
production.

As to the nature of that link, by which  
soul and body are united, it must be resolved  
into the will of their creator. It was his will,  
that there should exist such a being as man;  
and man was to be an aggregate of two dis-  
tinct substances. He could not be merely  
*spirit*, because he was designed to communi-  
cate with, and to preside over a world of  
matter; nor could he be solely *body*, because  
being such, he would not have risen much  
above the dust, he trod on. He might per-  
haps have vegetated a man-plant, by organi-  
zation alone, exalted above the flowers of the  
field, or the trees of the forest; but in such  
a state he could never have felt either pain  
or pleasure, have perceived, have thought,  
or have reasoned; nor could therefore any  
system have been realized, of worth or har-  
mony, wherein no master-wheel should be  
found to ennoble and animate the whole.  
Thus it was seen good that man should exist;  
that is, that a soul and body should be con-  
joined

joined in the closest ties of reciprocal influence, and that they should remain so, till the principal bodily organs became unfit to perform their allotted functions. Any action, in either of the partners, *absolutely* independent, would be contrary to their laws of union; because it could not be the action of a man, who by nature consists of soul and body. Before the soul can proceed to action, the bodily organs must be duly formed and modified; they then receive impressions from their proper objects, and then begin the first mental operations. In process of time other powers are gradually expanded, as their relative causes rise into action.

It was wisely pre-ordained, that a being, destined to commence his course from material objects, and from thence gradually to proceed to a world of higher order and excellence, should also in a similar scale acquire his experience and knowledge, beginning from the humble ideas of sense, and advancing progressively to the summit of science, perfection, and virtue, through the numberless degrees, which lie betwixt the two extreme points. Nor is it any debasement to the exalted

alted powers of the soul, that their first display, and after-exertion, should have been made dependent of the bodily organs; that they should mutually correspond in the exactest proportion of growth and maturity; and that finally they should fade and die off in the same ratio, as man descends towards the grave. All this only serves to evince their fixed destination; it points out a system of the most perfect harmony, wherein part must tally with part, and the whole accord, or the inevitable consequence is, discord, disorder, and dissolution.

When man is considered in this general aspect, all those difficulties instantly vanish, which are drawn from the state of infancy, from sickness, disorders, &c. It is clear that a blow on the head, or any accident, by which the finer organs of sense and reasoning are injured, must cause a derangement, and sometimes a total cessation of every mental operation. A broken or un-tuned instrument will never give you the pleasing sounds of harmony in music.



It is equally unphilosophical to argue against the union of soul and body from the examples of the recovery of persons drowned, strangled, or from other causes apparently dead. For evidently real life depends upon a certain state of the nervous system: as long as this remains sound and entire, so long the animal may live, provided a proper degree of motion be continued in the interior parts, or soon after it hath ceased, be again renewed by the application of stimuli, &c. Probably therefore the soul never quits its bodily habitation, till this becomes utterly unfit to perform vital functions; that is, not before the parts beg into decay and putrefy.

It appears then, that the main objections raised against the union system, amount to no more, than what are urged against every human opinion, hitherto advanced. But, as I have before observed, should difficulties be started really unanswerable, still they would not militate against the doctrine itself, which seems grounded on a series of arguments, deeply fraught with geometrical evidence. Were any thing still wanting; it would greatly contribute to enforce conviction, to place

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in a point of contrast the two systems, each freely charged with its several difficulties. I well know, on which would fall the heaviest burthen, were the even hand of candour to perform the office. But though *Materialism* might perhaps, for a time, support the huge load, powerfully held up by your hand; it must however soon sink, and be overwhelmed for ever, when absurdities mountain high are heaved upon it. That such absurdities are to be found, I trust, has fully appeared. Take care, Sir, you are not hurt by the fall of so ruinous and monstrous a fabric:---On the other hand, I dare defy the most virulent and subtle adversary to produce one single absurdity, through the whole system of *immaterialism*, which, with his hand on his breast, the Rev. Dr. Priestley will declare to be such.

If man, as hath been shewn, is not of any uniform material composition, but a being formed by the junction of two substances, so widely different as body and soul, and this soul be one and uncompounded, the direct consequence is, that the *soul of man is naturally indestructible and immortal.* Destruction

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can only be effected by a decomposition of parts, and where no such parts exist, eternal duration must necessarily follow. Can it then be said with the least semblance of reason, "that the *whole man* becomes extinct at death, and that we have no hopes of surviving the grave, but what are derived from the scheme of revelation?" The human body indeed will be dissolved in death; it is the fate of compositions to fall in pieces, when the tie is broken, by which the parts mutually adhered. But the soul must survive the dissolution of its partner; it can never know corruption: no agent, however powerful, excepting him alone, who made it, can destroy a simple uncompound substance; therefore, independently of *all revelation*, man by his philosophy is assured, that his soul must remain for ever

Unhurt, amidst the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter, and the crush of  
worlds. *Addison.*

Yet it may be said, of what singular benefit will future existence be to man, if it be his soul alone that survives the grave? The

soul, you will say, according to my doctrine, independently of its bodily organs, is not capable of one affection; exiled therefore from the body, it can neither be sensible of pain or pleasure; it will neither perceive nor think. In this solitary state can be no memory, consequently no personal identity. Envidable condition indeed, thus to be wrapped up in a torpid state of self-annihilation and insensibility!

I freely grant, that such a mode of existence would not be very desirable. Though were that really to be the case, I have still one pleasing reflection, which is, that I have shewn against you, that reason can itself point out to man an *hereafter*, beyond the grave. To demonstrate this single point hath been hitherto my leading object. But must philosophy then here abruptly desist from enquiry? Can it barely ensure existence? and can it not throw over it some few charms to brighten up the dreary prospect, whereby the child of nature may be allured to fancy it a state worth contending for? With regard to any future existence of our bodies, I am clearly sensible, that reason alone can give us no security, if they



they be considered in the direct view of material aggregates. In this light they must share the common fate of other bodies. Their constituent elements must indeed ever exist, because they are simple, as are souls and spirits; but such elements are neither matter, nor body, in the usual acceptation. I am likewise sensible, that the soul, detached from its material vehicle, is *naturally* unsusceptible of every affection. Still I am not discouraged, because it remains in the power of philosophy to demonstrate, that *man*, as a *moral agent*, must survive the grave: but man, as such, whatever region he inhabits, is essentially composed of soul and body; therefore will the *whole man* exist hereafter. That grand point then remains to be proved; indeed it is a necessary appendage to the doctrine, I have been labouring to establish. The whole demonstration shall be comprised in as few words as possible. It would be futile to dwell long on a subject, that has been so fully discussed by every writer on the immortality of man.

That God is a being infinitely *good* and *just*, cannot be controverted by the man, who denies

nies not his existence. Such a being will not condemn the works of his own hands; he must contemplate with pleasure the atom and the planet, the insect and the elephant, whilst in their respective spheres, each conforms to the guidance of his pre-established laws. But man must be his special care, because in his nature and attributes he approaches nearer to infinitude; and because the powers, which have been given him, are the real, though faint, resemblances of those high attributes, goodness and justice, which stand foremost in the list of divine perfections. Virtue must be the object most eminently pleasing to him; because virtue consists in the observance of order, which is itself justice; therefore must vice, the child of disorder, be displeasing and hateful.

But what is analogous to the divine perfections, and approved by the Deity, cannot but challenge a reward proportioned to it: order would otherwise lose its very name and nature. *Happiness* is the only reward, analogous to the nature of man; therefore is happiness the *necessary* attendant on virtue, in a system, where goodness and justice preside.

Vice

Vice must also, from the same essential connection, be followed by misery and unhappiness. Could the Deity be indifferent to virtue and vice, he would not be God ; because he would not be good and just : and were those opposites to meet with a similar treatment from his hands, the essences of things would be changed ; vice and virtue would be identified. Still is not vice in this life always followed by misery ; nor is virtue always prosperous. Look around you, Sir, and tell me if it be not so. But if all ends here ; if the cruel tyrant, who hath deluged his country in blood, and never in his fury spared nor innocence, nor virtue, yet still lives prosperous and pampered, and expires on a throne ; if such a one share an equal fate with the virtuous man, who hath lived in penury and died in torments, because his virtues were odious to the monster, just described ; if, I say, their fate be equal, to be mingled for ever with the dust ;---then are justice and goodness words without meaning ; vice and virtue are airy bubbles ; the world is left to the dominion of chance, or fate, or confusion ; it is not the product of an all-wise creator : therefore is God an infinite, eternal,

eternal, unmeaning phantom ; or rather he does not exist.

The conscious pleasure, which attends the performance of good actions, is by no means an adequate reward to virtue ; besides, it is from the future prospect that virtue draws more than half her charms. Ask the patient sufferer, what it is that blunts the thorn of affliction, and gives such repose to his mind ? ---Nor is the remorse, consequent on vice, a sufficient punishment, if it be any, to the hardened in iniquity.

There must then be another world, wherein will be compensated the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishments ; therefore must *man* exist hereafter. But as it is man, who will be miserable or happy, he must be capable of feeling pain or pleasure ; which cannot *naturally* be, unless his soul remain united to an organized body. It must also be the same, or a body similar to that he had upon earth ; because the rewards or punishments he then meets with, will be justly proportioned to the good or bad works done in the days of flesh ; of this equitable treatment  
justice



justice requires he should be sensible; which cannot be, unless he recollect his own deeds; but recollection pre-supposes the same or a similar arrangement of the nervous system. Thus also will be preserved his personal identity: he will connect the past with the present, and thereby discover that he who was, and is, is still the same.

With respect to identity of person, concerning which so much has been said, in my opinion, it depends on the *same* soul being always adjoined to a body similarly organized. As long as a man knows himself to be the same, from a recollected connection betwixt the past and the present, so long he is the same person, tho' from some external change of features he might not be known by others. But if, by any accident or sickness, memory should be so far lost, as that no recollection of the past should remain, though he could not then be sensible of his own identity, yet by a superior being, who might have beheld the same soul uninterruptedly united to the same body, he would still be denominated the same man.

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Finally,

Finally, Man's existence cannot be termed merely relative or temporary; for it hath been shewn that he will exist for ever, or rather, that as a moral agent he must again rise from the dust, that virtue and vice may receive their *just proportion* of reward and punishment. Farther than that term reason cannot advance. But why an all-good being should then permit him to drop into nothing, can never be said. The soul however must subsist for ever, as must the elements of matter, unless they be annihilated by infinite power.—Farewell.

March 19.

LETTER

## LETTER V.

REVEREND SIR,

YOU will undoubtedly think it very impertinent in me, or at least very idle, to present *you* with a general view of Dr. Hartley's theory; you, who have already communicated one to the public, and who, moreover, by a long intercourse with the system, have by this time rendered it so familiar, that it is become associated with every idea of your *mind*---I beg pardon for using so vulgar a term—and with every circumstance of your life. You are now just as much necessitated to adopt Hartley's system, you know, as is a Welchman's harp to sound

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Sir

Sir *Watkin's Delight*, when his smutty fingers run over the strings in a certain order. It is indeed vain to war against stubborn necessity; still I am determined again to analyze Dr. Hartley. One reason is; because *your* view of his theory does not altogether please me, and another is, that I think it possible to bring the substance of that doctrine within the compass of a few pages, in such manner, that it may with a little attention be easily understood; and therefore easily said, whether it really merits those high encomiums, you have so lavishly heaped upon it.

What, in my opinion, renders the Doctor's work more obscure, is, that you in your introductory essays, designed for its illustration, and the learned author himself, frequently express yourselves in the common philosophical language, when the very nature of your ideas required, you should have cautiously avoided it. In a system, for instance, where every thing is mechanism and fatality, what have you to do with *mental powers* and *operations*, and *endeavours*, and *choice*, &c. unless in the way of refutation? Whereas such words as often occur in your essays,



essays, and in Dr. Hartley, as in any other philosophical performance, of which the principles are just the reverse of yours. Such modes of expression greatly confuse the subject, and inevitably lead the reader, either into mistakes, or incline him to suspect, that the author's own mind was not quite clear, and settled to the system.---I will now attempt, in my turn, to exhibit this curious theory in its pure native habiliments, divested of all ornament and every idea, that does not necessarily adhere to it.

*Man*, according to Dr. Hartley, consists of two parts, *body* and *mind*. The first is subjected to our senses and enquiries: the latter is that substance or principle, to which we refer sensations, ideas, pleasures, pains, and voluntary motions; also to the same principle belong the properties of memory, imagination, understanding, and reason; in short, it is the seat of all affections, termed mental. The body may be considered in the light of a musical instrument, but whose cords are innumerable: these all originate from the medullary substance of the brain and spinal marrow, and terminate in the senses. They are  
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the *immediate* instruments of all the mental modifications. On the nature of their component elements depends the constitution of the nerves. At all events, the causes, by which they are affected, are dissimilar; consequently the effects must correspond. A nerve, resembling a stretched cord, will vibrate, when struck, either at its extreme point, or at any other part. The generated tremor will be continued to the brain, nor does this species of motion instantly cease, but dies away gradually. The nerves communicate one with another; not only those of the same sense, but also of different senses; either directly or by transverse channels, or by something similar, or infine by the brain, in which they all concenter. A nerve once strongly affected, seems to acquire a lasting tendency to the same line of direction.

Such are the preliminary ideas, on which is founded the doctrine of *vibrations*, the grand physical cause of all the phenomena of the human mind. For whatever changes take place in the nervous system, to these, according to the pre-established laws of union, uniform effects are supposed to correspond in  
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the mind. When a single nerve, for instance, vibrates; the mind receives a single modification: when two, or more; the mental effects exactly answer. When the vibrations are in one sense, the soul experiences effects appropriated to that sense. If the motion first generated in a particular sense, communicate itself to the fibres of some other; the mind will be analogously affected. If the nervous agitations be regular, the mental process will be regular: if the former, from various external or internal causes, be irregular and discordant, also will be so the mind's effects. If the nerves be strongly or gently moved, the soul will be correspondently agitated, and so on, through the almost infinite series of mental evolutions: therefore all the phenomena of *memory, imagination, volition, reasoning*, and every other mental affection, are only so many different mechanical effects, answering to the different vibrations generated in the nervous system. From hence arises the second great member of the Doctor's theory, the doctrine of the *association of ideas*.

I should have observed, relative to the brain and its nerves, that besides those which  
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are appropriated to the action of external bodies, such as the common objects of the different senses, there are, moreover, innumerable other bundles of fibres, stationed in the ears and eyes, calculated to receive impressions from the words of different languages, as these may act on either sense, whether by sound in pronunciation, or by light, when represented in writing. These may be called *intellectual* nerves, because they give rise to such ideas, as have acquired that appellation. In their mode of generation and mechanical nature, such ideas are no ways distinguished from the former ones of sense. But as in the ordinary course of things, different effects, though produced by one common cause, have received different appellations; so also hath it happened in the human mind. Here *vibrations* are the universal operative causes. The effects are denominated sensations; which are those internal feelings of the mind, arising from the impressions made by external objects on the several parts of our bodies:—or ideas, which are all our other internal feelings.—The ideas, which resemble sensations, are called *ideas of sensation*, or sensitive: all the rest are called *intellectual* ideas, because they bear



bear no resemblance to the general class of sensations, or their ideas.

So much for these mental effects, which from their respective natures, and mutual associations, are supposed to constitute the whole furniture of our minds. From this variety in effects, the mind is moreover considered as endowed with different properties, such as *memory, imagination, understanding, and will*; as a body is said to be extended, impenetrable, elastic, &c. from the different effects, that are produced in it. The mental properties will be explained, as their respective modifications fall under consideration, in the course of my analysis. I shall not scrupulously follow Dr. Hartley's order, because it is not always duly progressive.

According to the general laws, by which sensations and ideas answer to different vibrations, it is easily understood, that the various affections, belonging to the five senses, must necessarily arise in the mind, when their proper objects act upon them. The extensive sensual system having acquired by repeated vibrations a general tendency to motion,

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will readily, upon the slightest irritation, generate the sensitive ideas; which will rise, sometimes in an uniform order, answerable to their first appearance; and sometimes in a hundred associated forms. The first belong to *memory*; the second to the *imagination* or *fancy*. Thus are gradually formed all the groups of complex ideas, which, after a long and various course of association, it will not be easy to analyze into their several component parts. They coalesce together in the same manner, as the seven rays combine to form the colour *white*. But as in this colour each constituent ray is really in itself one and simple, though not distinguishable by the nicest eye; so also in mental aggregates, the component ideas are really distinct and individual, though often not discoverable by the most analytical process. The reason, why we are inclined to consider the complex idea as *one*, is owing to the crowded manner, in which such ideas generally present themselves: had we, in their primary formation, given due attention to them, we should then have seen how they coalesced together, and how distinct they really were, one from the other.---A being, that should never rise above  
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the level of sensations and sensitive ideas, would be of a very contracted nature: all his knowledge would be confined to the direct objects of sense, and his sole attributes would be sensibility, memory and imagination. Such are probably the generality of the brute creation.

*Voluntary motion*, as defined by Dr. Hartley, is that, which follows *directly* from any state of the mind, *i. e.* ideas. But for this effect it is previously requisite, that the part to be moved should have contracted a facility of moving in a certain direction. The hand of a child first bends from some stimulus applied to the palm: a play-thing is next put into the hand, and it contracts: the same play-thing, whilst in the hand, acts also on the eyes of the child: the nerves of the eyes and the hand communicate, at least in the brain, and the nerves of the hands are likewise connected with the muscles of that member. The child a second time sees his play-thing, but does not touch it; still the hand performs the action of grasping. This is effected by means of the association, that hath been formed, betwixt the nerves of the eye

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and the hand; in consequence whereof the latter are agitated, and from their union with the muscles of the hand, these are also contracted, and the child grasps.---The first motion of the hand, from the stimulus, was *automatic*, to express myself Hartleyan like; but the second, says the Doctor very gravely, is perfectly *voluntary*; because it proceeds from a state of the mind, *i. e.* from the sensation or idea of the play-thing. Other similar associations from the view of the nurse, and other objects, may easily take place, with which will be connected the voluntary action of grasping. In like manner will commence, and be perpetuated all other movements, such as walking, reaching, handling, &c.

From hence it is inferred, that muscular motion is performed in the same general manner, as sensations and the perception of ideas, *i. e.* by vibrations.---As this motion follows more or less directly from ideas, it is esteemed more or less voluntary. But when voluntary in the highest degree, it is not less a mechanical effect, as necessarily proceeding from its impelling cause, a particular vibration in the motatory nerves attached to certain



tain muscles, as does the motion of a watch from the action of its spring. The state of mind, immediately previous to the voluntary motion, is by the Doctor very obligingly honoured with the appellation of *will*.---Every being therefore susceptible of sensations, is capable of voluntary motions ; which are all deducible from the principle of association, as just explained. The same impulsive causes bring the child and every inferior animal to walk, &c.

If then the doctrine of *association of ideas* be founded on, and deducible from that of *vibrations* ; all sensations, sensitive ideas, and motions, whether voluntary, or automatic, will be uniformly conducted according to the state of the small particles of the nerves and the brain. “ So admirable is this hypothesis, (emphatically exclaims a great philosopher) which wears the face of that *simplicity in causes*, and *variety in effects*, which we discover in every other part of nature !”

But our system must not stop here : sensations, and sensitive ideas with the properties of memory, imagination, and voluntary motion

tion do not constitute man; he is something more than all this: let us then see how his other capacities may be developed by virtue of the same vibratory principles.

Signs, either verbal or symbolical, seem absolutely necessary to the existence of *intellectual* ideas; by Mr. Locke called ideas of *reflection*. For how could such ideas have been at first generated, or afterwards re-produced in the mind, had there not been something sensible and external to act upon, and modify the various fibres, necessary to impress the mind? Such intellectual ideas are those of substances, termed spiritual, and all ideas of incorporeal things, such as time, place, substance, thought, science, art, &c. To the existence of such ideas, language, it seems, was requisite; which composed of different words or signs, should by such signs act upon the organs of the sight and hearing, and correspondently raise in the mind ideas appropriated to them. By language, and the train of knowledge consequent from it, man enters into a new creation, and is eminently raised above the brute world, whose whole stock of science is purely of a sensitive nature,

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Intellectual ideas, says Dr. Hartley, are produced in the same manner, as the common ideas of sense, that is, by vibrations. To illustrate this point, we must go back to the mind of some child, who hath experienced many sensitive ideas, but on whose ear, as yet, no word hath ever sounded. To him I pronounce the word *dog*, and at the same instant point to the animal, he is playing with. A set of auditory fibres are agitated by the sound, and in his mind is generated a sensation proper to that sound. The experiment is repeated six or seven times successively whilst the child's eye is fixed on the dog. Gradually the ocular fibres, which by their vibrations, raise the sensation of the dog, begin to move in unison with the auditory ones, D, O, G. The next day, when I perceive the child's back turned to his play-fellow, I again smartly pronounce the same word: he instantly turns to him. An association is thus formed, and the idea of his dog will continue to be raised, as often as he hears the sound. Also seeing other animals of the same kind, they will be associated with the same word. A hundred similar associations will by degrees join themselves to the leading sensitive



sensitive idea; that is, every circumstance, and every person, that hath been connected with that idea, will by association have a power of recalling it. And not only will the idea of the dog be excited by these circumstances, but also that leading idea itself becomes introductory to the ideas of the adjoined circumstances, being made mutual causes to one another. But I am barely describing effects, the immediate physical causes of which are the nervous vibrations. The fibres, which have vibrated in the whole process regarding the dog, have contracted a power of moving each other in a definite order, by which each produces its proper effect. As the sound of the word dog hath been associated with the sensitive idea of that animal, in the same manner will other words proceed to their effects; and the child's book of knowledge will daily and hourly encrease.

But to the pronunciation of every word must at the same time be joined the sight of the object, it is meant to signify; for, as Dr. Hartley observes, "It is manifest, that words seen or heard can raise no ideas in the mind, or vibrations in the brain, distinct from their  
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visible and audible impressions, except as they get new powers from association." Therefore the word itself is only to be considered as introductory to the sensitive ideas; for where no sensitive idea rises, which is the case when we hear the words of an unknown language, nothing is perceived but sound. The reason is evident; no association has been formed betwixt that sound and any sensitive ideas.---What hath been said of words, relative to the auditory nerves, is, in the same sense, applicable to them, as marked down in writing, and thus made objects of another sense. New associations are then formed in a manner similar to the former.

As single words get a power of raising simple and complex ideas, so likewise sentences, collections of words, are united with collections of complex, and decomplex ideas; and this by the magic of association. As then it is by association alone, *i. e.* by calling up sensitive ideas, that words mean any thing; it is clear, that all our knowledge must necessarily be tied down to such ideas, and that, in fact, we never rise above the objects of sense. The various combinations of sensitive

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ideas.

ideas, are every thing the human mind can possibly possess. What then, it will with reason be asked, are these boasted *intellectual* ideas. I answer, or rather Dr. Hartley answers; nothing more than very complex collections of sensitive ideas, whose simple and component real elements, for want of a due attention to their first formation, we are not now able to distinguish.

We fancy, when a metaphysical word, for example, is pronounced or seen, that the rising idea, which instantly shews itself, is of a superior intellectual nature; whilst in fact it is barely a complex perception, made up of different sensitive parts, which by use have been closely associated with the metaphysical term. These associations were formed either so early in life, or in a manner so void of attention, that it is no longer possible to discover how they were effected.

It is not indeed easy to conceive the truth of this hypothesis; but if, as the doctor maintains, ideas of every denomination are merely vibratory effects; as such most evidently they can mean nothing, only as the representation-

sentatives of external objects. Words act upon the senses, and raise in the mind sensations or perceptions, exactly responsive to the sounds or characters; but should the business rest there, nothing would be understood; consequently an ulterior effect is requisite, which is the generation of an associated sensitive idea.---It will be farther urged: of what great benefit then is language, if it only serve to raise ideas, that might by other means be presented to the mind? The answer is; that though such sensitive ideas exist independently of language, still as it is by words, that new associations are cemented to the first acquired stock of sensitive ideas, its real use becomes very great and extensive. How barren of knowledge, from the sole want of language, are the minds of animals, and of persons born without the sense of sight and hearing.---But some words, such as *judgment*, *understanding*, *thought*, &c. have a power of generating ideas in the mind; yet evidently are so disjoined from every object of sense, that it is impossible they should only be intelligible by raising sensitive ideas. This, says Dr. Hartley, among many others, is but an instance of our ignorance, and no



proof of deficiency in the theory itself. Could we once see, he would tell us, the real constituent elements of those spiritualized ideas, it would then appear of what stuff they are composed. Let not then the geometrician, or metaphysician, or divine, vainly imagine that in their speculations, they rise above the level of vulgar thoughts: their sublimest conceptions are no more than so many bundles of ideas drawn from common objects, but so twined and twisted together, that it is become impracticable to discern their native features.

Hence it follows that, as every idea is the immediate effect of vibratory motions, the soul, in all her supposed operations, must be ever passive and inert. She may be compared to a mirror, on whose face are described a thousand different objects, just as they pass before it. This wonderful automatism---but it is now time to take a cursory survey of the remaining mental properties.

It is ridiculous indeed to talk of *properties*, when confessedly that of perception is the only real one: yet Dr. Hartley has preserved



served the old appellations, and he discourses about them with as serious an air, as if he were really persuaded of their existence. So inveterate is the force of long acquired prejudices ; for I can ascribe it to nothing else.--- We have seen sensations, sensitive ideas, memory, imagination, voluntary motion, and the intellectual forms displaying themselves ; but the *understanding* in its various branches now *comes forth*, and those wild modifications of sensations, commonly called *passions*.

Understanding, says the Doctor, is that faculty, by which we contemplate mere sensations and ideas, pursue truth, and assent to, or dissent from propositions." He means to say, would he appear consistent, that understanding is barely the perception of sensations or sensitive ideas ; these, as they are more in number or excited by stronger vibrations, draw the soul to one side, rather than another ; which is *assenting* to one, and *dissenting* from another proposition. As the scales of a ballance are drawn down by the greater weight ; the sinking scale assents, whilst the rising one dissents. This is speaking intelligibly and consistently ; " for assent and dissent,

sent, says he else-where, are only those very complex feelings, which adhere by association to such clusters of ideas, as are called propositions in general, and affirmations and negations in particular."---In short all the different modifications of the property of reason or understanding, are only so many different states of mind, springing from various vibrations; to which, as the sensations and sensible ideas, in their innumerable complex associations, draw in the same or different directions, have been given different names. I appeal to you, Sir, for the truth of this delineation, which frees me from the disagreeable toil of pursuing this subject any further, though Dr. Hartley with a design, I fear, of puzzling his readers, *writes and writes so much about it*, as Churchill says of the author of *the Divine Legation*.

The *passions* again are trains of sensitive ideas, suddenly and forcibly called up within us. They are excited by various objects, and by incidents of life, that have joined themselves to our ideas; add also words, or symbols, or infine every other associated circumstance, how minute or trivial soever. *Inest sua*

*sua gratia parvis.* A child, let us suppose by way of illustration, is burnt by the fire, in a certain room, in the presence of his nurse. There are so many circumstances annexed to the sensations of burning. The strong emotion or passion of *fear* is generated.---I ask you, Sir, *en passant*, by what mode of association this before unfelt passion is excited?---For a long time after the accident, the child will always be afraid, when he sees a fire, or enters the same room. Still these circumstances have not, as was before observed of words and other signs, any power to affect, independently of association. The same theory is applicable to the other passions.---As then the passions are collections of sensitive ideas, they must be states of considerable pleasure or pain: and as sensitive ideas are introduced by the five senses, these likewise will be inlets to the passions, according as the associated circumstances chance to operate. If to the same circumstance has been annexed a variety of pleasing emotions; these, as the occasion offers, will be all excited by it, in one general complex emotion or passion. Experience often evinces the truth of this observation. In fine sensitive ideas and passions,

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as they are in fact the same thing, originate all from the same cause, viz. nervous vibrations; and from the same source also proceed the six great classes of intellectual pleasures and pains, to wit, of imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy, theopathy, and the moral sense, exhibited by Dr. Hartley; all which are the same sensitive ideas by association amalgamated into a thousand forms; like the fabulous Proteus,

*Omnia transformant sese in miracula rerum.*

How far the sketch, I have given, be justly descriptive of Dr. Hartley's principles, must be left to your judgment, and the discernment of those, who have perused his theory. I once flattered myself, as I told you in the beginning of this letter, that it would be in my power to exhibit a short view of this system, easily intelligible to every reader; but I begin now to apprehend it will be fully understood only by such, as are conversant in metaphysical enquiries. A wide and extensive system, contracted to the narrow span of a few pages, becomes an object, only decypherable by the closest inspection. However

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I am confident, that I have not omitted one idea, strictly associated with the substance of the theory. Should it be found that the Doctor's explications sometimes deviate from the principles, as here stated; let the inference be, either that the system is itself inapplicable to some particular phenomena, or else that the good man now and then forgets himself. *Quandoque bonus dormitat*, hath been the case of many very respectable authors.

From another quarter, past all possibility of a doubt, can be demonstrated the legitimacy of my delineation, relative to the doctrine of this theory; it is, from the last inferences drawn by the Doctor in favour of *human mechanisim*. If that his final and favourite conclusion be just, then is all that I have said most rigorously true. For if man be a necessary being, that is, a mere automaton in all his evolutions; it is evident that every mental process is a mechanical effect, as I have shewn; and therefore as well derivable from vibratory motions, as from any other source. But I expect you will tell me that my theory is accurate, and that both

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Hartley and yourself understood the doctrine in the precise sense, I have affixed to it.

You must now, Sir, give me leave to present you, in my next, with a view of another system, with which you are very well acquainted, and to place it on a line of parallel with the doctrine, I have just exhibited. Yourself and the public shall decide their respective merits.-----Farewell.

*March 22.*

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## LETTER VI.

REVEREND SIR,

**A** GREEDABLY to my promise, having treated you with a general delineation of your favourite theory, I must now take a view of the doctrine of *instinctive principles*, as held out by the Doctors Reid, Beattie and Oswald, though there be nothing in the retrospect, either inviting or satisfactory. How many admirers that extraordinary system met with, through the course of some years, from its first appearance, and what in all probability will soon be its fate, disregard and oblivion, I need not mention. The moral reflection is,

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that in this it has shared the common lot of other similar productions ; and that the same hungry gulph will still continue to absorb the many unsubstantial *theories* of this and of future ages. To your strenuous endeavour, Sir, is principally owing the triumph, which *reason* is daily gaining over that system of *instinct* and usurped rights of *intuition*. It is my sincere wish that the doctrine, you are labouring to establish on its ruins, may be really promotive of the reign of reason and virtue. But here, I own, I have my apprehensions ;

----*Timeo Danaos & dona ferentes.*

Should it appear, from a fair display of both systems, that yours is equally inimical to *reason*, or even more so, than the philosophy of Scotland, what must we say ? It will scarcely be said, that *truth*, *virtue*, and *religion* have many obligations to you, notwithstanding your warm professions of stepping forth *solely* to maintain their rights. How far you may be then content *to cover your head with infamy*, and submit to the harsh appellation of a *bold and insolent innovator*, must be left to your own humility and moderation.---

Now



HARTLEY'S THEORY. 117

Now to the system of *common sense*, which I shall chiefly copy from your own description of it.

“ The term *common sense*, says Dr. Beattie, p. 45 of his essay, has in modern times been used by philosophers to signify that power of the mind, which perceives truth or commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an *instantaneous, instinctive, and irresistible impulse*, derived neither from education, nor habit, but from nature, acting independently on our will, whenever the object is presented, according to an established law, and therefore not improperly called sense; and acting in a similar manner upon all, or, at least, upon a great majority of mankind, and therefore properly called *common sense*.”

P. 122, “ The mind by its own innate force, and in consequence of an *irresistible and instinctive impulse* infers the future from the past, *without the intervention of any argument*.”

---P. 126, “ Reasoning from analogy, when traced up to its source, will be found in like manner to terminate in a certain *instinctive propensity*, implanted in us by our maker.”

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This same common sense is termed by Dr. Oswald, in his *Appeal*, the principle, which distinguishes *every individual of the human race*; the very *characteristic of rationality*; which pronounces with *quickness, clearness* and *indubitable certainty* on all *primary truths*, and was intended by our maker to be an almost *infallible direction in the whole conduct of life*, and especially in matters of *religion*.

Agreeably to the definition of this extensive principle, so clearly delivered by Dr. Beattie, it was first employed by Dr. Reid of Glasgow to establish, by an infallible proof, the existence of external objects, and their respective properties, the idea and belief of our own existence, and of the existence of certain thoughts, purposes, and dispositions of mind in other men, &c. as it is fully stated in his *Enquiry*.

Dr. Beattie then extended it to the discovery of *truth*, holding it out as its infallible *test* and *criterion*. He considers it in the light of a peculiar species of instinct, very different from Mr. Locke's idea of *judgment*, in the first instance, which results from the comparison

parison of ideas. It admits of no appeal to *reason*, properly considered, as you observe, which any person might be at liberty to examine and discuss; but on the contrary, every man is thereby taught to think himself authorised to pronounce decisively upon every question, according to his present *feeling* and persuasion, under the notion of its being something original, instinctive, ultimate and uncontrovertible. Thus certain particular maxims, as that of the existence of a material world, are adopted as *self-evident truths*, which to other philosophers appear susceptible of a satisfactory refutation. Hence also is the *judgment* (it is again your own remark) degraded to the level of the senses. *Truth* itself becomes changeable and arbitrary, as relative to particular constitutions, like the perceptions of any of our external senses.--- Nor is this doctrine solely restrained to *first principles*, say you; for though every truth, that is supposed to be discovered by this infallible and irresistible light, should be termed a first principle, still it would not be such in the general and philosophical acceptation; because each man's own feelings are supposed

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110 ON MATERIALISM AND  
to determine what is *certainly* to be believed,  
and what not.

This same common sense, which the Doctor establishes as the *test of truth*, he also erects into the standard of *moral obligation*, expressly excluding all reasoning on the subject. You are to be grateful for a favour received; you are to obey God, because you *feel*, that such is your duty. Thus the injunctions of a well-informed and ill-informed judgment are made to rest upon the same principle.

Dr. Oswald, even more sanguine than his brethren, carries still higher the influence of this grand principle, extending it to the fundamental doctrines and duties of morality, which comprise the whole of natural religion, the evidences of Christianity, and even the more essential articles of Christian faith.

*Reason*, in the mind of Dr. Oswald, is to be considered as the source of much evil and mischief; to which, in their disputes, divines and philosophers have often very erroneously  
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had recourse, whilst every thing, they ought to have wished for, might have been obtained, without any trouble, by applying to *common sense*.

From this general view of the doctrine of instinctive principles, as maintained by the Scotch philosophers, and which, I am sure, you will approve. because it is nearly verbatim extracted from your *Examination*, it appears, how pernicious such tenets must prove, should they be ever generally adopted. They open wide the door to fanaticism and every enthusiastic conceit, erecting an instinctive feeling into the universal judge of truth, in every branch of morality and religion. They give to the *senses* that superior light, which had before been appropriated to the judgment, in distinguishing truth from falsehood; whilst the dictates of the senses are maintained to be irresistible and infallible. Thus *reason* becomes an almost useless attribute of the human mind, and is only to be considered in the light of an auxiliary or an attendant on the great leading principle of common sense. Knowledge no longer results from a just view of things and a comparing of ideas; nor is

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a habit of accurate thinking acquired by a course of observation and perseverant reflection; for, as Dr. Beattie declares, his favourite principle perceives truth, and commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous, instinctive, and irresistible impulse.---*Nunc opus aggredior.*

- According to the Scotch school, our *principal* stock of knowledge is derived from the dictates of *common sense*; and is therefore the work of nature.---According to Dr. Hartley, the *whole* is from ideal *association*; and is therefore the work of *habit*.---Both principles are equally *necessary*, and equally *infallible* in their operations.---The bodily organs in both are considered as the vehicles or instruments of knowledge, on which when their proper objects act, ideas are generated in the mind, independently of the will, according to pre-established laws.

The immediate physical cause of ideas Dr. Hartley will have to be *nervous vibrations*: whilst the Scotch doctors without any minute investigation, have recourse to what they call, *constitutional propensities*.---When sensa-  
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tions are raised by the action of bodies upon us, Dr. Hartley goes no farther than the sensations themselves, the immediate effects of impressions: whereas Dr. Reid, &c. insist that, besides the sensations, is at the same time excited the belief of the existence of the objects themselves with their properties; a belief suggested by an instinctive impulse.--- But in both systems, every such mental affection is a necessary and mechanical effect, how various or manifold soever.

The only difference betwixt them seems to be, that Dr. Hartley admits of no effect for which he does not assign, as the proper cause, some nervous vibration; whilst the Doctors, without any sufficient reason, are labouring to establish others, which spring up immechanically, but however from some internal impulse. As far therefore as sensations, sensitive ideas, and their necessary Scotch adjuncts go, the dissimilarity of opinion is but trifling; they are all the effects of constitution or pre-established laws.

What objection now can you have to this part of the system, give me leave, Sir, to ask,

excepting from the single head of an arbitrary principle being established, as the source of such affections, which most probably hath no foundation in nature. This, you may tell me, is objection enough? However as long as it is confined solely to the objects of sense, it matters little. Nothing from thence follows inimical to reason, or virtue, or religion. Of what import is it, whether I am inclined to infer, from a supposed impulsive feeling, that an external world really exists; or whether, from a certain train of associated ideas, I am drawn to believe such existence barely probable? Philosophy may be more or less interested in the decision; but it is not from that quarter, your zeal appears to have taken its strongest dose of animation. Come we therefore to something of higher moment,

Dr. Beattie, as has been observed, erects his common sense into an unerring criterion of *truth*; by which means all argumentation is secluded, and every appeal to reason rendered superfluous; reason itself therefore becomes a very useless property.

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In the opinion of Hartley and yourself, the capacity of perception or *perceptibility* is alone to be considered as *essential* to man. This it is, which takes in every truth, of which the human mind is capable, in a manner, as instantaneous and impulsive, as Dr. Beattie's common sense. The various associations, that have been formed in each mind, analogous to the nature of things, constitute to each being his sum total of truths. These associations (I am forced to repeat) are a chain of effects, generated by a series of vibrations, which the mind necessarily *perceives* or *feels*, (for the terms are synonymous) whenever such particular causes begin to operate. Tell me, Sir, how *this perception* is distinguishable from the Scottish *intuition*: or what room is here given to argumentation, and the display of the reasoning powers? I greatly fear, this your favourite property, if nicely observed, will be found to make as bold encroachments on the province of reason, as that execrable common sense.

*Judgment*, in its common acceptation, may perhaps be nothing more than a bare perception, or what Hartley calls a complex feel-

feeling of the coincidence of ideas; but, in general, there must be a *comparison*, which as you again resolve into a more complex feeling, it hath no superiority over Dr. Beattie's principles. "That to us, says the last named gentleman, is truth, which we *feel* that we must believe, and that to us is falsehood, which we *feel* that we must disbelieve."---"Assent and dissent (Dr. Hartley p. 158.) must come under the notion of ideas, being only those very complex internal feelings, which adhere by association to such clusters of words, as are called propositions in general, or affirmations and negations in particular." Also, p. 23, "Thus propositions in particular excite, *as soon as heard*, assent or dissent; which assent and dissent consist chiefly of additional complex ideas, (or feelings) not included in the terms of the proposition."---Whenever therefore the internal feeling, called assent, is associated with a particular proposition, you *feel* you must assent or believe; and when the opposite association hath been formed, you *feel* that you must dissent or disbelieve.

What is this, but judging of truth and falsehood by your feelings, in a manner the most

most impulsive and instantaneous? Certainly had the philosophers, Hartley and Beattie, previously agreed on a union in sentiment, they could not have expressed themselves in terms more similar and approximated. With what face then, in direct opposition to your master, could you assert, p. 134, of your *Examination*, "That the faculty by which we perceive truth, is the farthest possible from any thing, that resembles a *sense*?" For what can possibly approach nearer to a sense than an *internal feeling*, which judgment, assent, and dissent, are by Dr. Hartley defined to be?

Your remark on the passage just cited from Dr. Beattie is, (p. 125) "To me this doctrine (of feeling truth and falsehood) appears to be entirely subversive of all truth; since speaking agreeably to it, all that we can ever say is, that certain maxims and propositions appear to be true with respect to *ourselves*, but how they appear to *others* we cannot tell; and as to what they are in *themselves*, which alone is, strictly speaking, the *truth*, we have no means of judging at all; for we can only see with our own eyes, and judge by our own faculties, or rather feelings."

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If this be the only bad inference deducible from the Doctor's notion, I suspect, it is secure enough. Truth *in itself* is doubtless something *absolute* and *immutable*, being the universal nature of things; but as it is contained in particular maxims and propositions, what judgment can we form of it, only from our own faculties? we can only say, how such propositions appear to ourselves; how they may appear to others, can not possibly be determined. If truth, both in its absolute and relative capacity, must ever to all men be the same, how happens it, that you and Dr. Beattie think so differently on the same subject? The fact is, you see with your *own* eyes, and judge by your *own* feelings, which are not the eyes and the feelings of other men: or, to speak in a style more strictly Hartleyan, where different associations have been formed, necessarily every mental process must be different.

It is scarcely possible for two men to think *precisely* alike on any one subject; because either their bodily organization, or circumstances of life, or both, must be always greatly dissimilar. The effects of such heterogeneity---



neity---but I am idly commenting on a passage, which, I am well assured, dropt from your pen at a time, your perceptions were not accurately associated with any regular cluster of ideas.

It must moreover be candidly allowed, that the instinctive system bids fairer for establishing uniformity of opinion amongst men, than any other sentiment whatever. *Instinctive feelings* are supposed to be congenial with human nature; they are therefore universally similar, and must in all circumstances operate in a regular and uniform manner. On the contrary, your doctrine of association must inevitably be productive of the greatest heterogeneity in sentiment possible. For every the least anomaly in the nervous system; every circumstance in life, and every accident, will form an association different from that of every other man, who hath not been placed, without the least variation, in the same scenes of action. Yet this can never happen. Where associations are different, every thing else, you know, must correspond. You may then say, what appears to yourself to be truth; but

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how the same thing may appear to another man, is out of your power to assert.

“As persons,” observes Dr. Hartley, p. 22, “who speak the same language, have however a different use and extent of words, so, though mankind in all ages and nations, agree in general in their complex and decomplex ideas, yet there are many *particular differences* in them; and these differences are greater or less, according to the difference, or resemblance, in age, constitution, education, profession, country, age of the world, &c. *i. e.* in their impressions and associations.”

As the most rational assent to any proposition, is said by Dr. Hartley, to proceed from a close association of the ideas, suggested by the proposition, with the idea or internal feeling belonging to the word *truth*, it follows, that every species of assent is a necessary and irresistible perception, excluding all reasoning and progressive argumentation, in the sense generally applied to these terms.

*Reason* hath been hitherto considered by philosophers as an active and superior power  
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of the mind, by which in a regular process, one thing is inferred from another. It was by the energy and expansive sight of reason, that Sir Isaac Newton, from the casual view of an apple falling from a tree, demonstrated by what laws the whole planetary system gravitated to their central sun. But if reason be that mechanical perception, described by Dr. Hartley, never certainly would I quarrel with the man, who should rather chuse to fancy his common sense alone, or any instinctive tendency, a sufficient criterion of truth, without the intervention of any argument. No longer, Sir, inveigh against the doctrine of instinct, as destructive of all reasoning and philosophical inquiry; but cordially join hands with Messrs. Beattie, Reid and Oswald, in mutually labouring to accomplish the great work, you have begun, of stripping man of every attribute, that is most valuable and dear to him, and of reducing him to the level of the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. We will call it a *Bel-lum Sociale*, or the *Family Compact* against man. Indeed as man is generally honoured with the dignified appellation of *monarch* or *king* of this nether world, it is not surprising,

*you* should attempt to curtail his prerogative, and deaden the lustre of his regal crown.

It would be superfluous to continue this contrast much farther, because it is evident that, how far soever the doctrine of instinct should be carried either in its application to truth in general, or in the particular departments of philosophy, morality and religion, it will always be found, that Dr. Hartley's theory is equally uniform in assigning the system of association, by which the same problems are to be solved. But, as I have so often remarked, whenever any phenomenon of the human mind is explained by association, then a cause is produced; in its nature as impulsive and necessary, as can possibly be the most unerring instinct; with this only difference that your system must be productive of eternal discordance and variety in opinion and in feelings. The language of the passions for instance, according to Dr. Reid, is instinctive, and by consequence universally the same in all ages and nations: whereas you assert, that they acquire all their power to affect us from particular associations, and that therefore a child might be pleased by a frown, and



and frightened by a smile. Your system, I own, may perhaps be equally favourable to the virtues of humility and moderation; for what can be more humiliating than the reflexion that, provided such associations have taken place, you are as much necessitated to appear in your present character, as a body impelled by any force must move in the line of direction? If unhappily, from a bad education, evil associations have been cemented, what may not be apprehended from so stubborn a propensity?

The observation of Dr. Beattie, relative to a man defective in common sense, may at least be applied to such a character, and be thought but a trifling evil; "That a peculiar modification of scepticism, or credulity, or levity, will to the end of his life distinguish him from other men."

Also is your notion equally favourable to fanaticism and bigotry: for the man, who is taught to believe, that all is conducted by a train of mechanical impulse, will think himself as much necessitated to pursue each warm impression, as he who trusts his conscience

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to the infallible guidance of instinct or interior lights. He may be either that poor priest-ridden mortal, whose blindness you so pathetically lament; or he may be obliged to subscribe the *Scotch confession of faith*; or, which is not less extraordinary, he may *perceive himself rather inclined* to dismember his native creed, and to dissent from almost every article of the Christian belief. Such are the necessary effects of preformed associations.

As in the great world of matter phenomena are said to be similar, when produced by a similar cause: so likewise it must be in the microcosm of man; where though the operating causes may be thought to be different, the effects will still be the same, necessary and impulsive, as long as the *mode* of production be similar. Instinct is infallible, so also is association: what therefore is true of one, relative to the good or bad consequences derivable from it, is likewise true of the other.---But I dare advance a step further, and prove that Hartley's system, of the two, is much the more dangerous. As far indeed as instinct is carried, I allow it to be nearly allied, in its consequences, to your favourite theory:

theory : but then from the letters, you sub-joined to your *Examination*, it appears that, notwithstanding the vague mode of expression so common in their respective works, the Scotch Doctors do not really mean to extend their systems to those lengths, you and others were inclined to imagine. Even the Dr. Oswald, the most sanguine of the three, in his letter to you, seems to confine his notions to primary truths ; and Dr. Beattie expressly tells you : “ If your meaning p. 5 is, that I represent common sense as superseding almost all reasoning about religion, natural and revealed, you charge me with a doctrine, which I do not, and never did believe, and which is no where either inserted or implied in any thing *I* ever wrote.” And a little after, “ My doctrine is only this, that all reasoning terminates in first principles, and that first principles admit not of proof, because reasoning cannot extend in infinitum.”

Notwithstanding these positive after-declarations, I cannot help thinking, but they certainly in their works mean their principles should be understood to operate far beyond the narrow boundaries of first principles and self-

self-evident axioms. If they do not ; we must conclude either that the language of the Tweed is above the comprehension of Englishmen, or that the Scots gentlemen's labour was indeed very vain and nugatory. Still their common sense hath its fixed limits, beyond which the reasoning powers are freely allowed to exert themselves. For after that leading principle, according to their hypothesis, hath regulated a certain series of perceptions, relative to the existence and common properties of bodies, and hath pointed out to us primary truths, and their more immediate consequences in the various branches of science ; then it is thought necessary to call in the assistance of reason, which rising from so sure a foundation, may then steadily pursue truth through its unnumbered windings and progressive evolutions. This I conceive to be the real, or at least the only rational, meaning of the instinctive system.

As then the powers of mind are all permitted to operate, after the instinctive principles have performed their duty, it is clear that man is again restored to what appeared his essential rank of being. He begins to reason,

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son, to compare ideas, to pursue enquiry by persisting in a due course of observation and reflection, to discriminate the nice bounderies, which divide sense from reason, and the various evolutions of his own mind. In short he ranges, with curious attention, through the wide regions of truth; noting the different steps, that lead to it, by converging lines, and carefully distinguishing the false lights of fancy or passion from the cooler investigations of the reasoning faculties. With the same analytical and wary observation, quitting the paths of philosophy, he enters on the study of the other sciences, and masters, by degrees, their enormous heights.

Now hath the northern school evidently gained a transcendent superiority over you; for whilst Dr. Hartley is drawing out from man his stores of knowledge, by the heavy laws of mechanism, and explaining causes and effects, as you do the phenomena of the air-pump; Dr. Beattie, in the mean while, hath unbound the energetic powers of a rational and intelligent being, and given them to rove wheresoever *inclination* might determine their flight. Your man, labouring under

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der the severe preffure of vibrations, and solely actuated by their influence, may be perhaps the mafs of clay, which was moulded by the hand of Prometheus; but he is never that being, formed to the image and resemblance of infinite perfection, on whose countenance was *breathed the breath of life* by the Deity in person,

I will tease you, Sir, no longer with the diffuffion of a fubject, which, I am fure, muft give you difpleafure. It is fufficient to have fhewn that your doctrine is never fuperior to that of common fenfe, and that every objection, made by you againft the latter, particularly with regard to truth and free enquiry in philofophy and religion, may be returned upon yourfelves.

If then the Scotch fyftem, as you fo ftrenuoufly infift, muft be rejected by every man, who cares for truth, virtue and religion, what, Sir, will be the fate of Dr. Hartley's Theory?---Farewell,

*March 26.*

LETTER

## L E T T E R VII.

REVEREND SIR,

IF the systems of *association* and *instinct* be chargeable with the same unphilosophical and pernicious consequences, relative to truth, virtue and religion, as, I trust, hath clearly appeared from my last letter, they undoubtedly merit the same severe treatment; to be anathematized, exploded with scorn, and marked with the black stigma of infamy. You, Sir, I am confident, will be the first to give the alarm, and to hold out to public detestation your once admired theory, if, lay-

ing aside every partial and interested view, you can consider it, as really fraught with any evil tendency. Because, as you have had the unspeakable happiness of a very strict and religious education, you know; it follows, that the most distant prospect of immorality must affect you greatly. I am fond of repeating a remark, which seems to give you so sensible a pleasure. This it was that called up all your apostolic zeal against the doctrine of common sense. I shall soon expect to hear, when you have duly considered the dark side of Hartley's theory, (a side, from which hitherto you seem to have turned your eyes) of some signal action from you; such as religiously committing to the flames the darling system, and then announcing to the public a new philosophical profession of faith.---But as you may again tell me, or some friend may do it for you, that truth is to be spoken at all times, and that a system may be philosophically true, though it should prove hurtful in its application to life and morals, I will therefore farther consider the doctrine of association in its internal principles, and weigh them in the just scales of reason and philosophy.

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However it is my opinion, that no sentiment should be ever promulgated, which will not prove practically beneficial; and it may properly be asked, whether a sentiment can be internally true, which is not also calculated, more or less, to promote the general good of mankind?

Dr. Hartley's theory, as appears from my general view of it, may be considered either with respect to *vibrations*, the universal physical cause; or with respect to the effect, *sensations* and *ideas*, in their simple state, and various complex associations.

From the nicest observations on the texture and disposition of the nerves, and the general mode of impression from external bodies, the vibratory doctrine seems highly pleasing and satisfactory. Nor can it at all be doubted but something, at least similar to tremulous motion, is the immediate instrument of sensations and other innumerable mental affections. To require an *evident* analogy between cause and effect, is asking too much, where it is not in the power of the most minute observer to discover the mode of operation. It suffices that experience,

rience, the best guide to truth, should uniformly point out a series of effects, which always, in the most just accord, answer to a particular order of impressions.

You are disposed to differ from your master in thinking that, the sum total of mental affections may be resolved into mere mechanical vibrations. This notion I have proved to be absurd and impracticable; otherwise indeed, it might have associated very well with your Doctor's system. For where all is cause and effect according to the heavy laws of matter, it seems superfluous to require the presence of an immaterial substance, could matter alone perform the whole work. Sensible of this difficulty, he chose to form *his* man of soul and body; but that the spiritual part might have no pretext to glory in its superiority, he invidiously despoiled it of all its high endowments, and bad it servilely submit to all the mandates of the body. Thus the soul from being considered as a substance supremely active, and gifted with the powers of reasoning and of ruling the motions of the body, is let down to the level of a being, divested of every real faculty, made passive

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and inert, and solely capable of receiving impressions, as a bit of wax takes every figure that is pressed upon it. That such is the soul of Dr. Hartley, I refer to his own *observations on man*, and the general view I have given of his system. Little solicitous for the company of such a stupid partner, you, Sir, positively decline all connexion with *Soul*, and humbly submit to rank with solitary matter.

As things are got so far, I see no reason, why, with a little of your advice, the ingenious Mr. Cox might not be able to enrich his collection with two or three *men-machines*, of his own construction, that might really operate in a *human* manner, might gradually advance to the summit of knowledge in all the arts and sciences, and perhaps present the public with their several discoveries in religion, philosophy and politics.

The *inertia* of the human soul, on which Dr. Hartley's theory principally turns, is in my opinion, alone sufficient to invalidate the whole system. It is subversive of every received notion, and appears to be contradicted  
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by an interior conviction of an exerted force, wherein, on many occasions, it is impossible we can be deceived. That many of our affections follow mechanically the nervous agitation, is not at all to be doubted. Such are, in the first place, all *sensations*. When the organs of sense are impressed by their proper objects, and in consequence thereof a tremulous motion communicated to the nerves, a mental modification, a *sensation*, is instantly raised, whether we are willing or not. When the eye is open, it must see every object, that acts upon it. Such effects are necessary and mechanical.

*Sensitive ideas* also, which spring up in the mind, whenever the fibres are agitated in a manner similar to the first received motion, and are therefore revived sensations, may be considered as mechanical effects. This happens in the cases of memory, imagination, and in dreams. But though all such affections be the immediate and necessary result of vibrations, and consequently the mind in their reception be strictly passive; yet in every such case, a certain concomitant *feeling*

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or *perception* is called up, most evidently not the *direct* effect of any known vibration.

Let us suppose the two first bodies, that act upon the organ of smell in a child, to be a rose, and a lump of assa fætida. Instantly two sensations are raised, the one *pleasing*; the other *displeasing*, or painful. The child *distinguishes* one from the other; it *loves* the one, and *dislikes* the other. Remove the rose, and let the assa fætida be still applied; the child will not only continue to *dislike* the latter, but will also be *sensible* of the absence of the former, and probably *wish* for its renewal. Re-apply the rose; the child will, with additional pleasure, inhale its odour, and be *conscious*, at the same time, that it is a smell similar to that it enjoyed before. Remove the assa fætida it will *rejoice* in its absence. How many affections have we here, raised by a kind of magic in the infant mind, which can not be called the *direct* effects of the vibrations, excited by the two bodies! *Distinguishing, liking and disliking, sense of absence, longing, additional pleasure, consciousness of similarity, rejoicing* for the removal of pain.

In the absence of those bodies, when again the same nerves by any cause whatever are put in motion, miniature sensations or sensitive ideas are raised in the child, which likewise, in their turn, will be attended by the just mentioned concomitant feelings.---That something similar happens to ourselves, every moment of life, I refer to your own perceptions: observe them with minute attention, and they will tell you that so it is. I rather chose to illustrate my assertion from the example of a child, because in such a mind no previous associations can possibly have been formed, by which you might fancy those perceptions could be accounted for. Dr. Hartley's theory is therefore defective in its first stage of application; because no sufficient reason can be assigned to the origin of the affections, I have instanced, without overthrowing the essential basis of his system; which is, that every mental modification is the immediate effect of a nervous vibration. To say that such attendant feelings arise from motion communicated to a certain train of corresponding fibres, though the mode of communication remain a secret, would be highly unphilosophical: besides, such a supposition

position is absolutely impossible in the case of primary sensations, when no previous associations are allowed to have existed. Without quitting the regions of sensations, memory and fancy, let us farther enquire, whether any other effects may be discovered, unalliable with your system.

In every first impression, and renewal of sensation, the mind is awakened into a particular state, we call *attention*.---I might have mentioned this before.---Suppose your ear to be affected with the sound of music : it pleases you, and you *attend* to it. The proper effect of the tremulous motion, excited in the organ, is the *mere sensation* of different sounds : the *attention* given to them is a very distinct affection, of which each one is conscious, but which cannot be considered as the effect of vibrations. *Attention* accompanies every mental modification of a certain degree of intensity. Besides this attention given to the sound, the mind moreover *distinguishes* note from note, as the infant distinguished the agreeable from the disagreeable odour. This again is an effect not explicable on your hypothesis.

The *comparing* sensations and ideas is a third effect, of which Dr. Hartley can assign no cause. Whether in comparing the mind be active or passive, matters not; it suffices at present that it cannot be shewn to arise from any vibration. All knowledge springs from comparison; without it every sensation or idea is merely an insulated perception. But as insulated perceptions are the only proper and direct effects of vibrations, it follows, that all comparing of such perceptions is an ulterior or adjoined affection of mind, to which your principles cannot extend.---Harmony, symmetry and beauty owe their very existence to the percipient and *comparing* power in man. But the perception of the different actions of bodies on our organs is nothing, unless such effects be moreover *compared*: and this it is, which gives to harmony, &c. all the reality they possess.---But I have even my doubts, whether *perception* itself can be considered as an effect of vibrations. For if every perception be not really *identified* to each sensation and idea, which it accompanies, it is certainly a distinct modification; and if so, what is its generative cause?

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Sensations and ideas are not always *perceived*; but, though unperceived, they must really exist, because every vibration, as an active cause, must produce an effect: therefore is every perception of a sensation or idea distinct from the sensation and idea, and consequently ulteriorly to be accounted for.---The general inference then is, that *attending, distinguishing, comparing*, and even *perceiving* are distinct affections, not explicable by Dr. Hartley's theory.

The bare supposition of a *voluntary* effect, in a system of *universal mechanism*, is absurd beyond all conception. Such, however, is Dr. Hartley's hypothesis, relative to a species of motion in man, he terms *voluntary*. Motion in bodies is said to be *necessary*, because it is produced by an impulsive force: Why not therefore in man? But if in man it loses the character of *necessary*, as springing from an internal principle; the same may also be applied to the expansive motion of elastic bodies. The Doctor insists that, his motion is at once *necessary* and *voluntary*. The word *voluntary* supposes the action, so denominated, to flow from the *will*: The will by him is defined to be that *state of mind, which immediately pre-*  
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*cedes the action.* But as in this case, the mind itself is not the *physical* cause of the action; it is ridiculous to call such actions voluntary. The real cause is the nervous vibration propagated to the muscle. It is produced as mechanically as the most automatic motion. The mind, as generally understood to be a substance endowed with the power of acting, does just nothing. Yet, if we are not greatly deceived, there are some actions in the human œconomy, which a man is entitled strictly to call *his own*: if so, Dr. Hartley again errs most egregiously.

*En passant*, I will just observe how unphilosophical it is, to allow a real active capacity to the nervous system, (for there, one nerve is made to communicate its motion to others, which can only be done by a physical impulse) whilst the soul is asserted to be void of every the least energy, and is reduced to a state of absolute torpor and inaction.

*Judgment* also, which is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, is another mental affection not generated by vibrations. To the mind, for example, are present two or more ideas: the mind not only

only perceives their presence, but moreover seems often to dwell upon them, if their coincidence be not instantly apparent, and then asserts their agreement or disagreement. In similar processes of a more complex nature, the intervention of a third idea or term is necessary, before the truth or falsehood can be discovered. However, in every case, either of simple judgment, or of reasoning, an affection is excited, evidently distinct from the effects of the nervous agitation.

I will allow *thinking* in general to be nothing more than the perception of ideas, either sensitive or intellectual, as they are generated by direct impressions, or by all the complicated modes of vibratory associations: still, throughout, the *thought* or perception is not the idea perceived; it is something distinct, and therefore more properly may be termed a mental property, which, according to a pre-established order, is called into action, whenever ideas are presented. Were it not so, what would the most complex associations of ideas be, but so many independent detached effects?

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In place of ideas, let us consider their productive causes; for as causes and effects are mutually relative, the same thing is applicable to either. *Vibrations* then, the causes of ideas, are in themselves barely distinct nervous motions, in number equal to the moved fibres. They may be compared to a series of sounds raised by the stroke of a plectrum. So also in man, as the vibrations are severally distinct, their effects, the ideas in the mind, correspond in the exactest order. A being *merely* susceptible of such impressions, would not in nature be raised above the rank of a very complex musical instrument. Therefore man cannot rest here: he *perceives* the effects excited in his soul, he *compares* them, and by the comparison discovers either their coincidence with one another, or the want of it: in the first case they please him; as allied to something, he calls *truth*; and in the second, they displease by deviating from that master object. But all these modes of perception, so visible in *judgment* and in every reasoning process, are not effected by tremulous motion, and cannot therefore be reconciled with the vibratory doctrine. The same thing is likewise to be  
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said of the different states of mind, termed *doubting, believing, dissenting, &c.* For though they owe their rise to various trains of ideas, yet are they not the ideas themselves, but certain very complex feelings, so called by Dr. Hartley; and consequently not to be accounted for on his general plan. If they be feelings not congenial to the human mind, but raised by the sole charm of association; or, as the Doctor will have it, purely of a *fictitious* nature; then it might easily be, that a man should doubt, or believe, or dissent in an inverted order from all mankind, on points hitherto considered as self-evident, as that two and two make four. But if *truth* be in itself any thing fixed and immutable; then in the mind of man must be faculties, analogously perceptive of it, and duly capable to discriminate its nicest features, in every distant appearance, or unnatural junction with falsehood and uncertainty. Such faculties are displayed in the acts of comparing, doubting, assenting, &c. they are not therefore the mere transient effects of association.

Dr. Hartley's description of the manner, by which he conceives ideas are associated with

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words, is, in general, exceedingly just and philosophical. It is easily understood, how particular sounds, used to express sensible objects, may be so associated with them, as always, when pronounced to excite their representative ideas. Likewise that words, which denote intellectual objects and collections of other words, only become intelligible, from their being united to something sensible, appears equally satisfactory.---I believe moreover that the sensible pleasures and pains are the great originals, of which all the intellectual ones are but so many modifications; or, that they are the sources, from whence all the intellectual pleasures and pains are ultimately derived. Still, all this fine structure can never be the work of capricious association alone: for as the first pleasing and painful sensations point out a peculiar constitution of soul susceptible of such feelings, it is clear, that every similar subsequent affection, how remote soever from the primitive feeling, must yet originate from the same principle. Were not this the case, I see not how it could possibly happen, that the feelings, the passions in all their gradations, and the intellectual pleasures and pains  
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of mankind, should be so nearly similar. What few deviations from the common line, now and then appear, are easily accounted for from incidental associated adjuncts.

Your opinion of the gradual formation of the ideas of *moral right and wrong*, from a great variety of associated impressions, explains, I grant, that prodigious diversity in the sentiments of mankind, respecting the objects of moral obligation. For, as you well observe, if the idea of *moral obligation* were a simple idea, arising from the view of certain actions or sentiments; why is it not as *invariable*, as the perception of colours or sound? Yet how variable and discordant are men's opinions! We see one person practise as a moral duty, what another looks upon with abhorrence, and reflects on with remorse. Nor can I think that, abstracting from association, the mind, by any instinctive propension, ever forms a moral judgment concerning actions and affections.

But what must be said of the *eternal reasons and relations of things*; on which, it is by many writers supposed, morality of actions

is founded, and our judgment concerning them? The reasons and relations of things are undoubtedly necessary, immutable and eternal. Of them a certain portion, which appertain to the present system of human truths, is placed within our reach. Man's capacities are proportioned to their nature and degree of elevation. But if every perception be factitious; then, in spite of all internal reasons and relations in the objects, our sentiments might widely deviate from, and the consequent actions be in direct opposition to every thing that is right and virtuous. To obviate such deleterious effects, it appears, that an all-wise being must have provided some principle, innate to our very constitutions, whereby the charms of truth and virtue might be felt, and their respective rights immoveably fixed, in opposition to error and vice. This notion by no means excludes the doctrine of association; it only restrains a little the universal empire conferred upon it, by Dr. Hartley and yourself.

As in the general view of human knowledge appear on every side certain primary  
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maxims, which by a kind of native light flash upon the mind, so also must it be in the particular line of morality. When the truth of those principles is once received, the growing structure of succeeding knowledge rises with security, and a wide similarity in sentiment must universally prevail. It is a fact that, the opinions of mankind, to a certain line, are exceedingly uniform, barring the small deviations, that different education and climate will naturally produce. In the more distant conclusions, a greater heterogeneity begins to take place, which increases more and more, as we recede from the line of evidence and high probability. Yet all along a thousand associations are formed, which give a peculiar cast to the general sentiment, denoting modes of education, difference of age, prevailing fashions, influence of climate, &c. Thus is the power of association rendered sufficiently prevalent and extensive. But to insist that, the whole work of morality is from thence, is being far too sanguine and precipitate. For though the first ideas of right and wrong should be as invariable as the perceptions of colours or sounds, still the subsequent sentiments and actions, from the causes

causes just assigned, will naturally branch out into all the varieties, we so often meet with. But as no man ever appeared, who did not allow that the *whole was greater than a part*; so never was there a savage, so wild and unenlightened, who did not feel the evidence of the grand moral principle, *do as you would be done by*, whatever his actions, from passion or the like, might have been. I infer then, that there are certain truths, so congenial to the human mind, that independently of all association, their evidence must be perceived, as soon as presented. And why should this be more inconceivable, than that particular impressions from external bodies, should have been so adapted to our natures, as always to excite, in a determinate order, some pleasing and some painful perceptions. In this point therefore is the system of association again defective, and, as will be thought by many, in a matter of great moment to the cause of truth and morality.

As Dr. Hartley concludes his observations by saying, that he hath shewn, that all the affections and reasonings of man are the factitious work of association; I will also close  
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this letter with a few general reflections on his doctrine.

Through the long series of mental evolutions many things have been instanced, which appear, not to arise from the causes, the Doctor hath assigned. If therefore I have not been most flagrantly deceived, his theory is exceedingly imperfect; and you, Sir, have strangely erred in holding it out, as the only rational plan, whereby the mental phenomena can be satisfactorily investigated. To what a low state is man indeed reduced, if all his affections, and all his strongest efforts of reason be nothing more than a long series of mechanical effects! He is no otherwise superior to the brute animal, and perhaps to the plant, than as one machine is superior to another, by a more complex assortment of parts.---To assert that all perception and knowledge is effected by association, as I have repeatedly observed, is to say in other words, that man hath neither attributes nor abilities, but that he is merely perceptive. The whole system being thus reduced to a single point, it appears not difficult to discover, from the least attention to what passes within our own minds,

minds, whether that single property, be all that man can boast of. In this light I have carefully viewed the subject, and therefore will assert, that we possess many other powers essentially different from perception. I know, indeed, how extensive is the reach of that faculty; far more so than is generally imagined.

Another strong objection to Hartley is, that not even perception itself can be the immediate effect of vibrations. This also hath been shewn. But when a *general* cause is assigned to *all* the effects, within a given sphere, and it is at the same time, by others made evident, that more than half of such effects, are not derivable from it; certainly so notorious an imposition merits to feel the chastening rod of criticism. A man, when physical experiment and observation direct not his enquiries, is easily deceived by false lights: a theory may then be precipitately adopted, because it pleases, and because it may seem to unlock the secrets of some mysterious powers, which, when coolly considered, will prove very imperfect, and perhaps even glaringly false in its general application.

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The doctrine of vibrations and associations I greatly admire, for its admirable simplicity and most palpable conformity to many mental phenomena; but then Dr. Hartley, I am confident, hath carried it much too far. This hath been no uncommon manœuvre with all fabricators of systems and airy theorists. Impatient that any effect should rise above their comprehension, such philosophers are determined to force every element of nature, how stubborn soever, to conform to their favourite scheme.—Farewel.

*March 29.*

Y LETTER

## L E T T E R VIII.

REVEREND SIR,

**D**R. Hartley's theory is not only reprehensible from its coincidence with the doctrine of instinct, and from its insufficiency to explain all the affections of the mind, but far more so for being productive of a consequence, big with fatal evils to the interests of morality and religion. It is clear that I mean to speak of the *mechanism* or *necessity* of *human actions*, in opposition to what is generally termed *free-will*. There have been, and still are very sensible men, who, without entering

tering any farther into the question, would, on the single score of mechanism, immediately determine a system to be false, let its philosophical merit, in other respects, be ever so great. Indeed, so jealous are we of the signal prerogative of free-will, that it is not surprising, we should treat that man as an enemy to his species, who aims to despoil us of it. This however you and Dr. Hartley are striving to effect; and, what may to many appear still more extraordinary, you take glory to yourselves for the attempt, and loudly proclaim yourselves the very best friends to virtue and religion. But if man is not free; by what a strange illusion is he constantly duped! what artful demon first inspired him with the thought of arrogating to himself a privilege, of which, through the whole stretch of nature, no example could be found? Tell me, Sir, from whence arose the first element of that associated thought, by which man is inclined to esteem himself the master of his own operations?---So much hath been said, by innumerable writers, on the subject of free-will, that, at this time, to attempt a fresh discussion of it would be exceedingly idle. I shall therefore only make a few critical re-

marks on Dr. Hartley's observations. He hath placed the whole matter in the most clear and unambiguous light.---The doctrines of association and necessity are so intimately combined, that a similar fate must ever attend them. If man be free, then is the Doctor's theory erroneous: but if it be proved, that man is a necessary agent, (pardon, sir, the absurd expression) his whole system is then most just and philosophical.

“ By the mechanism of human actions,” says Dr. Hartley, p. 334, “ I mean, that each action results from the previous circumstances of body and mind, in the same manner, and with the same certainty, as other effects do from the mechanical causes; so that a person cannot do indifferently either of the actions *A*, and its contrary *a*, while the previous circumstances are the same: but is under an absolute necessity of doing one of them, and that only.---Agreeable to this, I suppose, that by free-will is meant a power of doing either the action *A*, or its contrary *a*; while the previous circumstances remain the same.”---The first is called *philosophical necessity*, and the second *philosophical free-*



*free-will*.---He goes on "If by *free-will* be meant a power of beginning motion, this will come to the same thing; since, according to the opinion of mechanism, as here explained, man has no such power; but every action or bodily motion, arises from previous circumstances, or bodily motions already existing in the brain, or from vibrations, which are either the immediate effect of impressions then made, or the remote compound effect of former impressions, or both."---As there can be no freedom of actions where the above definitions of *free-will* are not applicable to them, the question is thus placed on the most fair footing.

His first argument in favour of mechanism, the Doctor founds on the allowed fact of human actions proceeding from *motives*: "*Motives*, says he, act like all other causes. When the motive is strong, the action is performed with vigour; when weak, feebly. When a contrary motive intervenes, it checks, or overrules, in proportion to its relative strength, as far as one can judge. So that where the motives are the same, the actions cannot be different; where the motives are different, the actions

actions cannot be the same."--Such a series of known facts, the Doctor thinks, as clearly evince, that *motives* are the *mechanical* causes of our actions, as the phenomena of nature tend to prove the mechanical operation of heat, diet, or medicine.

This reasoning would be conclusive, did motives really act as do other causes. But there is a *moral*, as well as a *physical* mode of operation; else, whence arose the idea of *moral influence*? The first is applicable to motives; the second to mechanical causes. The truth therefore is, not that motives, agreeably to Hartley's conception, like the heavier weight in a ballance, impel or determine a man to act, but that man from the view of the motives presented to his mind, *determines himself* to act, by the free exertion of his own innate powers. On this supposition, indeed, he must possess a *self-determining* capacity, as is evident; a capacity, in my opinion, so essential to his very being, that, without it, he could not be *man*; because without it, excepting by organization alone, he would not be different from the common bodies, which surround him. But though motives

rives are not understood to act physically, still the actions, to which they give rise, will uniformly partake of their nature, by being relatively vigorous or feeble. For as the mind inclines to act from the view of motives, the more vivid these are, the more intense must be the exerted force, and vice versa.---When I term motives *moral causes*, I would not be understood to mean, that motives have no physical effect upon us; for all action is physical: my meaning is, that motives do not *themselves* produce our voluntary actions. These are the direct effects of the self-determining power. The motives, by means of vibrations, act on the mind, which is thereby roused and inclined itself to generate such actions.

Having advanced thus far, let us suppose a man to make the self-examination, the Doctor proposes: let him consider a short time after any material action is past, whether, if he were once more placed in the same rigidly exact circumstances, *he could possibly do otherwise than as he did*. His inference, you think, must be, that he could not possibly do otherwise; and therefore that he was necessitated to do the very thing, which he did.---On the other

other hand, my inference is, that, in the very same circumstances, I should again do the same thing; because the same motives would always have a similar influence, and consequently my determination, to be *rational*, must be exactly relative to them. But then, in both cases, of the first and second determination, as the action followed the free determining power, and not any impulsive influence from the motives themselves, such actions I can strictly call my own; nor have I the least idea of any impossibility of my action being otherwise.

He tells us, in the second place, that human actions are necessary, "Because they all proceed from vibrations, which are allowed to be mechanical causes." But as it hath been proved that all our actions do not spring from *that* source, the force of that reasoning falls to nothing.---Thirdly he supposes it exceedingly absurd, and destructive of all abstract reasoning, that the action *A*, or its contrary *a* could equally take place, while the previous circumstances remain precisely similar; "It is the same thing, he asserts, as as-

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firming, that one or both of them might start up into being, without any cause."— In this single point are concentrated the principal difficulties attending the doctrine of free-will.

It is a maxim universally true, that nothing can happen without a *sufficient cause*, or reason of existence; therefore no effect in the material world, in men, or even in the superior regions of spirits, can possibly be produced, of which there is not an immediate cause: Cause and effect must be ever relative, and correspondent. In circumstances then rigidly similar, as hath just been noticed, to imagine that the action *A*, or its contrary *a*, may equally follow, is in fact asserting, that an effect may start up into being without any cause; for the cause to the action *A*, is to its contrary *a*, just as no cause, and *vice versa*. But it will be urged, do not the Anti-necessarians affirm such an indifference to be essential to human liberty? I answer—When a man considers certain motives, as they are offered to him, he sees the propriety of acting in a manner answerable to such motives; and therefore produces the action *A*. The contrary action *a* appears to him, at the same

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time, absurd; nor can it consequently be joined with the same motives. Still he perceives, as it is he himself who is the author of *A*, that he hath likewise a complete and full power of generating *a*; but not without falling into an absurdity. The action therefore *A*, or its contrary, may *possibly* follow the same rigid circumstances; but, on that supposition, one will be *rational*, and the other *inconsistent* or *foolish*. This is applicable to all deliberate actions, when both sides are duly considered. But if it be supposed, that a man only views one side of an object, in this case, the action *A*, and its opposite, cannot indifferently take place; but *A* will be so connected with a particular train of motives, as always to follow them necessarily. Yet may a man still call such an action his own; because not the motives, but he himself is the cause of it. However, in similar actions, we are not strictly free. This often happens in the hasty storms of passion; and mankind, from observation, have agreed to consider such actions, as more or less necessary and involuntary---In all deliberate cases, wherein alone a man can be thought properly to act, he enjoys his freedom in the most extensive

sense of the word; though, at such times, the action *A* can alone with propriety correspond to the given motives or circumstances. From this explication nothing follows either destructive of abstract reasoning, or at all resembling an effect void of sufficient cause. For as all motives are calculated, in the same circumstances, to raise similar affections, there is the same basis given, on which to ground the most precise reasoning, whether the effect be derived from an immediate mechanical impulse, as Dr. Hartley conceives it is, or whether by such motives the mind be so actuated, as itself to generate the analogous effect. The moral is as *certain*, though not *necessitating*, as is the *physical* cause.

The principal objection to mechanism, the Doctor fancies, arises from the existence of the *moral sense*; but when it is considered, that this sense (if in the human breast there be any such thing, and if there be, it must itself overturn the grand principle of association) is made to spring up in the mind necessarily and mechanically, it evidently rather contributes to confirm, than to weaken the scheme of necessity, though not exactly

in the sense maintained in your school. The Doctor's elaborate discussion of this point to me then appears quite useless and trifling.

Now follow in regular order a long train of objections, which the Doctor himself, like a most honourable adversary, boldly draws up against his own favourite doctrine.---The first is taken from our own internal feelings of freedom. His answer to this objection, as far as it regards a species of free-will, by him termed *popular* or *practical*, shall be considered hereafter.

Secondly, to the difficulty that "if man have not free-will, he is not an agent," he replies by observing, that if *agency* have its sense determined, like other words, from the associated appearances, all objection falls at once.---That is, if agency be defined to be no agency, but only the appearance of it, then may mechanism be consistent with agency; because under mechanism, speaking, walking, &c. will appear to be actions, though really they are not, any more than the motion of a clock, or the whirling of a spinning-wheel. Therefore action in appearance  
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and mechanism are consistent, but real action and mechanism are incompatible and mutually destructive of each other.---At least, the Doctor hereby makes a candid confession of man's universal inertia and passive obedience.

To his third objection he answers; "that though man be subject to a necessity ordained by God, it does not follow that God himself is subject to a prior necessity."---But then, my good Doctor, if God is not subject to necessity, he is free; and if free, what species of freedom does he enjoy? Not merely that of a *popular* and *practical* nature; because such freedom, you know, is barely the power of doing what you desire, of deliberating, suspending, &c. or of resisting the motives of sensuality, ambition, resentment, &c. (they are Hartley's own words.) It remains then that the Deity be *philosophically free*, (there is no third species of freedom;) but if so, why may not man participate of his maker's attributes? And, what are we now to think of the many internal absurdities and contradictions, with which, the Doctor would fain persuade us, the notion of philosophical liberty teems? He confirms his opinion of the Deity's

Deity's free-will by adding, "That according to the doctrine of mechanisim, God is the cause of causes, the one only source of power;" therefore is he prior to every cause, and consequently essentially free.---If the most declared enemy to necessity had sought for the best argument, whereby to establish the *possibility*, at least, of human liberty, he could not have discovered any thing half so strong in its favour, as this reasoning of Dr. Hartley.

Fourthly he objects, that it may be said, that men are perpetually imposed on, unless they have free-will, since they think they have. "But here," adds he, "free-will is again taken in the popular sense, and the man, who thinks himself free in this sense, is not imposed on."---What title this species of free-will may have to the appellation, shall be soon examined: I will now observe, that a *really* man is not free, in Dr. Hartley's sentiment, whenever he thinks himself so, he is manifestly deceived, for he imagines himself possessed of a power, to which he has not the least pretension.

The fifth objection, "that the doctrine of mechanism may seem to destroy the notion of a particular providence altering the course of nature, so as to suit it to the actions of men," appears to make nothing against it. For as in both systems Almighty God is the cause of causes, and the source of all power; equally the whole universe is subject to his will, to rule and modify it at pleasure, whether man be free, or whether he be subject to a code of laws, as fixed and necessitating, as are those of the material world. Should man be free, still have all his actions been eternally open to the divine inspection, and to them hath been adapted the subordinate course of nature, perhaps in the best manner possible, or, more properly, in the manner that best suited the designs of infinite goodness and wisdom.

As to what may be objected sixthly, that all motives to good actions, and particularly to prayer, are taken away by denying free-will, the Doctor replies, that "according to the mechanical system, prayer and good works are the means for obtaining happiness, and that the belief of this is the strongest of motives

tives to *impel* men to prayer and good works." ---Most undoubtedly, when a man hath had the unspeakable happiness of a strict and religious education, and when the belief, just mentioned, hath strongly possessed his mind, it is then as impossible that such a person should be a bad man, in the mechanical system, as it is for a body, forcibly drawn by any power, not to correspond to it; and the Doctor's reason for it is the best in the world, *i. e.* because such a man is *impelled* to prayer and good works. But should a man unfortunately have been born out of the way of such a virtuous education, or should he have received a very bad one, (a thing which daily happens to many) by what motives can *he* be impelled to prayer and good works? By the impulse of his associated ideas he will be hurried into vice and irreligion; nor will reformation be ever in his power, because virtuous impressions can never give a new determination to the whole nervous system, that hath been callously modified into vice.

Seventhly, it is objected, that "necessity destroys the distinction between virtue and vice."---This, says the Doctor, is just as  
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the words are defined. If virtue be defined obedience to the will of God, a course of actions proceeding from the love of God, or from benevolence, &c. free-will is not at all necessary; since these affections and actions may be brought about mechanically."---But if such actions may be called virtuous, because they mechanically follow a train of ideas, to which have been given the names of *obedience, love of God, benevolence, &c.* in the same sense, may every mechanical effect in nature be termed virtuous, because they all correspond to a pre-established system; and thus the motions of a clock or watch will be so many acts of virtue. Or, if the latter effects may not receive this honourable appellation, because to their immediate productive causes have not been given the names of love, obedience, &c. this will only prove them *nominally* different from the former. The time may therefore come, should the mechanical doctrine be generally adopted, when a regular going clock may be called as virtuous and religious a being, as was Doctor Hartley, or is at present his faithful disciple, the Reverend Dr. Priestley.---What hath  
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been said of virtue is, in an inverted order, equally applicable to vice.

"A solution, continues he, analogous to the above, may be given to the objection taken from the motion of merit and demerit." *i. e.* That the term merit should be applied to the above mechanical virtuous actions, and that of demerit to the bad ones; as a good watch is virtuous, and so merits, or as a bad one is vicious, and so demerits.---Manifestly, a scheme, which thus widens the boundaries of virtue and religion, is far preferable to that contracted system, which confines every good practice merely to the rational or intelligent part of the creation!

As the Doctor in his reply to his eighth objection, namely that mechanism makes God the author of sin, candidly allows, "That it seems equally difficult, in every way, to account for the origin of evil, natural or moral, consistently with the infinity of the power, knowledge and goodness of God;" it is needless, I should enter any further on the question, than just to observe, that in the system of mechanism, God is really the  
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author of all evil, moral and natural, (if by the bye in such a system there can be either any moral good or evil at all); whilst in our sentiment, natural evil alone arises from his disposition of things, and the moral belongs solely to man, who by the free abuse of his faculties, deviates from established order. The difficulty on our side is to shew, why God made us free, when he foresaw the abuse we should make of the granted favour---The substance of the ninth objection and reply hath been considered already in my observations on the nature and influence of motives. Now comes the enumeration of six consequences from his doctrine, which our philosopher esteems very strong presumptions in its favour.

First, "It removes the great difficulty of reconciling the prescience of God with the free-will of man."---This is certainly true, because it annihilates every thing like free-will.

Secondly, "It hath a tendency to beget the most profound humility and self-annihilation."---This is again true, if associations

have been formed productive of such affections ; otherwise, it hath an equal tendency to beget the most consummate pride and self-importance.

Thirdly, " It hath a tendency to abate all resentment against men."---Or to generate the most inveterate hatred and animosity. The reason for that inference is curious ; " Since," says he, " all that they do against us is by the appointment of God, it is rebellion against him to be offended with them," ---Of how flagrant an act of rebellion was then lately guilty a certain reverend philosopher, who, because a poor labouring Chymist had innocently taken to himself the honour of a few *airy* discoveries, announced publicly his resentment, and threatened the rash *plagiarist* with all the vengeance of offended dignity !

Fourthly, " It greatly favours the doctrine of universal restoration. Since all that is done is by the appointment of God, it cannot but end well at last."---The Doctor is at least willing, it seems, to make some amends for having deprived man of his liberty ; and I am  
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sure, he is entitled to the warmest thanks of gratitude from the black list of murderers, robbers and hypocrites; whatever the good and virtuous may say, for his thus admitting to a participation of their happiness such a lawless rabble, or for giving so open a countenance to present crimes, by a promise, that all, shall at last end well,

Fifthly, "It hath a tendency to make us labour more earnestly with ourselves and others, particularly children, from the greater certainty attending all endeavours, that operate in a mechanical way."---But, I suspect, it will be found, that the friend to liberty may labour with equal earnestness, since he knows that his endeavours and instructions on the minds of children operate as powerfully, as in the Necessarian System. He hath moreover advantage on his side, that he knows it is in his power to amend what is wrong in himself, and contribute to do the same in others.

Lastly, "There are many well-known passages of scripture, which cannot be reconciled to the doctrine of free-will, without the greatest harshness of interpretation."---And there

there are also many well-known passages infinitely more irreconcilable with the doctrine of mechanism.---*Ne futor ultra crepidam*. What hath a philosopher to do in the high regions of theology?

In his next section the Doctor asserts; "Religion pre-supposes free-will in the popular and practical sense; *i. e.* it pre-supposes a voluntary power over our affections and actions."---Were I not by this time pretty well acquainted with his mode of expression, I should be inclined to think, from the section before me, that the Doctor had really forgotten himself, or was seriously aiming to overthrow the whole system, he had established; so gravely does he inculcate the necessity of voluntary operations, and of a power, the soul should retain over her affections and actions.---"Religion," adds he, p. 347, "being the regulation of our affections and actions according to the will of God, it pre-supposes that after this will is made known to us, and we in consequence thereof, become desirous of complying with it, sufficient power of complying with it should be put into our hands."---Never was any thing

more orthodox; for to require of man the practice of any virtue or abstinence from vice, is clearly pre-supposing, that he possesses the powers of executing, what is required. The contrary supposition is too absurd to be thought of. But it remains to be considered, whether, in the mechanical scheme, man is really in possession of this voluntary power.

An action, as hath been already noticed in a former letter, is called *voluntary* by Dr. Hartley, when it proceeds *immediately* from ideas and affections, in contradiction to that which follows from the bodily mechanism, and is therefore said to be *involuntary* or *automatic*.—Were all our actions of the latter kind, we could not be supposed to have any regulating power over them; and such they really are in the system of necessity. For though voluntary and involuntary actions are maintained by the Doctor to spring from different sources, the first from the mind, and the second from the body, still if they both <sup>are</sup> necessarily, they are both equally out of a man's own power. Actions from ideas flow as necessarily and mechanically, by the force of

of association, as do the automatic ones from the muscular agitation. In fact, they are both generated by a similar series of causes: for though it may be imagined, that voluntary actions originate from the mind; yet as the state of mind is itself produced by vibratory motions, they are these same nervous motions, that by being associated with the parts allotted to voluntary action, communicate their influence to them, and thus cause their action. At all events, as I have just said, as both kinds of actions follow mechanically the impulse of their respective causes, they are both necessary, and consequently not in our power: therefore hath not man a power over his actions and affections, and therefore religion, in the mechanical system, cannot pre-suppose free-will in the popular and practical sense, unless it be granted that religion can pre-suppose an absurdity.---If this reasoning be not decisive against Dr. Hartley, I am willing to give up all pretensions to the least atom of common sense, and fairly submit to be classed in the same rank of being with the pen I write with.---However that religion may be a rational scheme, it is requisite, that men should have a capacity of complying with



with its injunctions. On this Dr. Hartley insists; but in his sentiment it is impossible: therefore again, either religion requires no such capacity, or if it does, the Necessarian System is false. Chuse, Sir, which you please.

In the succeeding section the Doctor still advances in his religious enquiries, and asserts that "religion does not pre-suppose free-will in the philosophical sense."---Should this be true, then are religion and liberty eternally divorced. *Practical free-will* I have just proved to be chimerical; and, if your philosopher can support his present assertion, also is *philosophical liberty* equally fanciful.---As the arguments adduced, in this section, against the union of religion with philosophical free-will, are, in substance, the same, as have been already examined, I shall decline all minute discussion of them. Indeed, if free-will in its *common acceptance*, as I have proved, be not only not absurd, but even essential to the existence of many human actions; and if religion, according to Hartley, necessarily pre-suppose a voluntary power over our affections and actions, then does it evidently follow that man is free, and all farther enquiry

into the subject is rendered nugatory. It may be proper, however, to add a word or two.

The first part of this section is taken up in shewing, that *popular* liberty suffices for all the purposes of virtue and vice, blame and praise, reward and punishment, as well from the hand of man, as of God. But as popular liberty is no liberty at all; the sum of the whole discourse only serves to prove, that virtue and vice are nominally different; being both necessary and mechanical effects; that blame and praise are no otherwise equitable, than as they may be applied to the common affections of bodies; and that man may punish the breach of laws in his own defence, as he would endeavour to obstruct the action of any other cause, that should hurt him, or endanger his life. But then the Almighty, who is out of the reach of all injury from his creatures, cannot in justice inflict punishment on man, for the commission of crimes, any more than he could reasonably punish a stone, that should fall, and thereby crush either a mushroom or a man.

As philosophers, says the Doctor, we are able to talk consistently and clearly on these subjects; "For, properly speaking, virtue and vice are to actions, what secondary qualities are to natural bodies; *i. e.* only ways of expressing the relation, which they bear to happiness and misery, just as secondary qualities are modifications of the primary ones, &c."---As the secondary qualities therefore are nothing real, but mere phenomena; such are also virtue and vice; mere compositions and decompositions of natural good and evil. This is talking consistently and clearly, as becomes philosophers.

A little more philosophy: "Since all the actions of men proceed ultimately from God, the one universal cause, we must, according to this language, annihilate self and ascribe all to God. But then, since vice, sin, &c, are only modifications and compositions of natural evil, according to the same language, this will be only to ascribe natural evil to him; and, if the balance of natural good be infinite, then even this natural evil will be absorbed and annihilated by it."---It will

*Like Aaron's serpent swallow all the rest.*

*Vive la philosophie!* This is putting an end to vice and sin in a very masterly manner.---He then warns us against the indiscriminate use of popular and philosophical language; that, if applied separately in their distinct provinces, all will be just and fair; but if confounded together, a thousand absurdities will from all sides flow in upon us. In other words, we are to understand, that, according to vulgar conceptions, vice and virtue, religion and morality are something, but that, in the eye of a philosopher, all their distinction, and even reality vanishes; they become mere shadows or appearances, as is the world itself, and all its appurtenances, when viewed through the philosophical medium.

Why a benevolent Creator gave free-will to man, which he foresaw would be to his unhappiness and ruin, I can assign no other reason, than that such a being entered into his general plan of existence. But this difficulty is not diminished in the system of necessity---what, may it here be asked, hath philosophy to do with the inscrutable designs of providence? *The cælum ipsum petimus*



*mus stultitia*, it appears, should be the general motto to almost every performance of our modern reasoners.---To screen myself a little from the personal application of that severe reflection, I will here add in reply to another similar difficulty urged by Dr. Hartley, that, as a philosopher, I know nothing of the *eternity* of misery or happiness hereafter. The conviction, that virtue will be rewarded, and vice punished, in the most exact proportion to each, by a God of infinite justice and goodness, gives me ample satisfaction. Indeed, the idea of a general renovation is a necessary consequence from the system of mechanism; but that probably, in the minds of many, will not greatly contribute to enforce its belief.

“The natural attributes of God,” says the Doctor, in his title to sect. iv. “or his infinite power and knowledge, exclude the possibility of free-will.” His proof is; “for to suppose that man hath a power independent of God, is to suppose that God’s power does not extend to all things, *i. e.* is not infinite.”

To

To elucidate this difficult point as far as I am able, I beg leave to observe, that though it be requisite, that every creature depend of its maker; yet it seems, this dependency may be sufficiently preserved, in the hypothesis of man being the real and physical cause of his own operations.---All dependency is not essentially alike: the log of wood, void of every power or faculty to act, and that requires an external impulse to put it in motion, is undoubtedly dependent. But must every other being be thus servilely dependent? or, is not that creature more perfect in its kind, which, after it hath received its existence and analogous attributes from its maker, with them also receives the grant of using its allotted powers, and of conforming thereby to the order and harmony of a subordinate and graduated system? Such a being is man: nor thus privileged is he withdrawn from due subjection to his creator, whilst in his proper department, by the free exertion of his faculties, he as faithfully fulfils the will of heaven, as the inferior myriads of beings, which, each in their sphere, obey the general laws of impulse or gravitation. Man, therefore, possesses no power independent of God; though

though eminently raised in the scale of existence, he operates in a manner superior to the emmet, or the loadstone. All his actions belong to God, with the greatest propriety of expression, because they all proceed from the exercise of powers, which were given him by his maker.

Nor is free-will less consistent with the knowledge, than with the infinite power of Almighty God. The great and good author of the *Religion of nature delineated* hath with his usual precision and depth of reasoning thrown as much light on this mysterious subject, as can be seriously desired. I make no apology for the quotation. — “There is indeed (p. 102) a common prejudice against the *prescience* (as it is called) of God; which suggests that, if God foreknows things, he foreknows them infallibly or *certainly*: and if so, then they are certain: and if certain, then they are no longer matter of *Freedom*. And thus prescience and freedom are inconsistent. But sure the nature of things is not changed by being known, or known beforehand. For if it is known truly, it is known to be what it is; and therefore is not altered by this. The truth

truth is, God foresees, or rather sees the actions of free agents, because they *will be*; not that they will be because he *foresees them*. If I see an object in a certain place, the veracity of my faculties supposed, it is *certain* that object is there; but yet it cannot be said, it is there *because* I see it there, or that my seeing it there is the *cause* of its being there: but because it is *there*, therefore I see it there. It is the object that determines my sensation: and so in the other case, it is a future *choice* of a free agent, that determines the prescience, which yet may be infallibly true. Let us put these two contradictory propositions, B (some particular person) *will go to Church next Sunday*, and B *will not go to Church next Sunday*, and let us suppose withall, that B is *free*, and that his going or not going, depends merely on his *own will*. In this case he may, indeed, do either, but yet he can do but *one* of those two things, either *go* or *not go*; and one he must do. One of these propositions is therefore now *true*; but yet it is not the truth of that proposition, which forces him *to do* what is contained in it: on the contrary, the truth of the proposition arises from what he shall *choose* to do. And if that truth does not force him,



the *foreknowledge* of that truth will not. We may sure suppose B himself to *know certainly* before hand, which of the two he will choose to do, whether to go to church or not (I mean so far as it depends upon his choice only); and if so, then here is B's own *foreknowledge* consistent with his freedom: and if we can but further suppose God to know *as much* in this respect as B does, there will be God's *foreknowledge* consistent with B's *freedom*.—  
 a fair reply to this reasoning of Mr. Wollaston would please me greatly.

Dr. Hartley finally concludes by specifying the practical tendency of his doctrine to promote humility and self contempt, in opposition to that of liberty, as naturally productive of pride and self-conceit. But as he at length ingenuously owns that, “as the assertors of Philosophical free-will are not necessarily proud, so the assertors of the doctrine of mechanism are *much less* necessarily humble;” we have clearly the advantage over them in point of humility. And, as though the good Doctor, in a fit of holy zeal, were determined, by one dash of his pen, totally to annihilate all he boasted excellen-

cies and superior advantages of mechanism, he immediately subjoins by way of proof to the above observation: "for however they (the necessarians) may, in theory, ascribe all to God; yet the associations of life beget the idea and opinion of *self* again and again, refer actions to this self, and connect a variety of applauses and complacencies with these actions." But where such associations are formed, pride and self-conceit are the necessary result; and as these associations arise *again and again* in life, what room is there for humility and self-annihilation? Therefore hath the doctrine of mechanism, from the Doctor's own confession, a general tendency to cause and support the vices of pride, vanity, self-conceit, and contempt of our fellow-creatures; and, I wish to God, these were the only evils, which that doctrine is calculated to generate, and immoveably rivet in the human breast. ---Consequences so detestable---*la tête me tourne*---I am tired to death with the matter and length of this letter; therefore Rev. Sir, farewell.

April 10, 1776.

LETTER

## LETTER IX.

REVEREND SIR,

**F**ATIGUED and exhausted, as I told you, with the length of my last letter, I had determined there to close my correspondence, and take my final leave of the subject and of you. But nothing, surely, is more changeable than the human heart! One night's rest recruited my spirits: I again resolved to pursue my metaphysical journey. Give me, Sir, your attention a few moments longer, and I will release you---perhaps for ever---It is, indeed, a matter of very little consequence,

either to you or the public to know, what are my sentiments relative to the subject of the human mind. Such, however, as they are, you shall have them. Deign, good Sir, to cast a transient glance, as they rapidly pass in review before you, like the whimsical figures, which, I dare say, you have often seen, and perhaps laughed at, exhibited by the humble experimenters on the magic lantern.

Elated with the thoughts of having gained a victory over Hartley and yourself, had I there sat down, solely intent on the bloody prospect of the field, I might have been called a destroyer---the appellation pleased me not. Only the savage mind delights in the work of destruction.----But, all farce and sentiment aside, I am willing to draw you out a short sketch of my own notions, which I flatter myself you will say are consistent and rational enough. Indeed, from what has already accidentally fallen from me, you have been able to collect the main substance of my thoughts.

Man is a mixed being, a compound of two substances essentially different, *matter* and *soul*.

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The soul is a substance in nature *simple* and *highly active, sensitive, perceptive, cogitative* and *rational*: it is united to a body, curiously organized, whose constituent elements are likewise *simple* and *active* in an inferior degree, but *insensitive, imperceptive, incogitative*, and *irrational*. Great, therefore, is the heterogeneity of these two partners; but they are

intimately united, according to a pre-established system, from whence results a most perfect and exact accord. The dispositions and constitutional attributes of the one are attuned to the character of the other. They mutually and *physically* act upon each other.

---When the bodily organs have acquired a due degree of strength and elasticity, then their respective nervous systems, in consequence of impressions received from external objects, are put in motion; this motion, whether of a vibratory or of any other kind, is transmitted to the soul, and the soul is correspondently affected. Every such affection is a *sensation*. These increase in number and variety, as increase and vary the number and quality of impressions. Thus is the infant mind modified into a thousand different forms

or affections; and each affection is expressive of the impression, which is made.

As all such sensitive modifications arise in the soul, necessarily and mechanically, from the action of their respective causes, it is evident that, in every similar process, the mind must be passive. In a word, the mind I conceive to be passive not only in receiving *sensations* from the immediate action of bodies; but also in the generation of *every idea*, sensitive or intellectual; because ideas of every denomination, are effects produced in the mind by certain motions communicated to a particular set of fibres. I am as much necessitated, for instance, to have the idea of a person or thing, I have before seen, when certain fibres, either in dreaming, or in memory, or imagination, by what cause it matters not, are put in motion, as I am to perceive the sound of a trumpet, whenever that instrument strikes upon my ear. In the same impulsive manner are also forced upon my mind the intellectual ideas, annexed to the words *God, Spirit, Substance, theory, art, &c.* when I hear those several sounds pronounced, or see them written. Therefore, I  
lay

lay it down as a certain truth in my philosophy, that *the mind of man is strictly passive in the reception of every idea*. And this must be allowed by every one, who reflects, that we never have it in our power either to create new ideas, or by any express act of the will to obliterate those, we have once received. They are all, at first, derived from the impressions of external objects upon us, and continued by the renewal of similar motions in their appropriated fibres,

As the nervous motions or vibrations are gradually formed into different combinations, as vary and multiply their excitative causes, so to them must exactly correspond the effects or ideas generated in the mind. Thus will be produced all the phenomena of fancy or imagination, and every other mental association of complex and decomplex ideas, the sum total of which constitutes all the knowledge of a Pope or a Newton. I agree then with you and Dr. Hartley in adopting the doctrine of vibrations, and the consequent generation and association of ideas, as far as ideas may be taken for the immediate objects of the mind

mind in thinking.---Now, Sir, let us shake hands, for we are going to be widely separated.

The sole faculty of *perceiving* ideas, as they rise, is, as I have often observed, according to your theory, all that man can boast of. The mind of the greatest and most learned man may by you be very justly compared to an elaborate and very extensive literary performance, to an Encyclopedia or a Chamber's dictionary, in which are delineated innumerable ideas; and the mental stock is acquired and arranged in as mechanical a manner, as are the words of a book, from the artful association of the printer's types. The soul sits an idle spectatrix of the business, that is carrying on under her eyes; and, ever chained down to her fated destiny, is forced to engage in every scene, good or bad, pleasing or painful, as the nervous vibrations direct.

I have said that, besides the faculty of perception, I conceive the human mind to be gifted with various other powers, which gradually or progressively rise into action, as their proper objects present themselves. These

powers,



powers, though congenial with our being, remain dormant in the soul, till they are in due time and circumstances, called forth.--- Other powers we may also possess, which are destined never to be displayed, till we enter upon a new world, of greater beauty and perfection.---The first modifications the mind receives are *sensations*; their analogous or correspondent parts are, *perceiving*, *liking* or *disliking*, *distinguishing*, and *attending*. These faculties, as I have already shewn against Dr. Hartley, cannot be the direct effects of any nervous vibrations; consequently they are to be considered as certain mental attributes, which, according to a pre-determined system, are designed to make their appearance, when such or such sensations are produced. Of what use would a thousand insulated sensations be, if there did not within us exist some property, which might feel their presence, and be interested in their pleasing or painful mode of operation?

The faculties or rather properties, just mentioned, are subordinate, however, to sensations; they rise mechanically, whenever the latter appear. They are common to us

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and the extensive animal world, but varied, and gradually more or less perfect, as are their respective possessors. As the sensations of an oyster are fewer in number, and probably less acute than those of the monkey or the elephant; also his perceptive, attentive and distinguishing powers are respectively of an inferior kind. For the first years of man's existence, he appears, in no respect above the common level of animal life; as all his mental affections are merely sensations, or the most simple and unassociated sensitive ideas, he can as yet have exercised no capacity, but what is appropriated to that inferior class of affections. But as his organs become more perfectly formed, their fibres vibrate to new impressions, from a more exalted order of objects, and a consequent train of ideas is generated. Now are called forth new powers, and the great work of reasoning and of voluntary life commences.---The ideas, I am speaking of, are termed *intellectual*, and are produced by language, verbal or symbolical,

But it may be asked; if on the first appearance of certain ideas, the superior faculties, I am going to exhibit, are mechanically  
excited

excited, wherein can be placed that free, internal, and self-determining power, I mean to establish?

When the mind is furnished with a sufficient store of Ideas, or to speak more properly, when certain collections of fibres begin to vibrate in a manner excitative of intellectual ideas, then are developed the responsive powers of *reason*. But as in every other line, here also the work is carried on by slow and progressive marches. The first glimmerings of reason are, most probably, automatic, if reason in its embryo state be made to consist in the transient comparison of two ideas. Though I am rather inclined to think, that every comparison is a voluntary action; because it cannot be proved, that whenever the mind perceives the presence of ideas, then it is always necessitated to compare such ideas, with one another. But whatever may be determined of the *first appearance* of the intellectual powers, it is to me clear, that they gradually become more and more voluntary, as they are the oftener exercised, and as the several bodily organs

and members acquire a greater aptness to receive and communicate motion.

When pleasing ideas are first presented to the infant mind, as their number is but small, they are eagerly and almost mechanically attended to. But as the stock is varied and encreased, the mental objects are multiplied, and we are rather pleased with shifting our attention, and with playing from one idea to another.---The faculty, not merely of *attending*, (for that seems to be, more or less, a necessary consequence of the presence of ideas, and perhaps may be nothing more than a *continued perception*) but of varying our attention, and of passing from one set of ideas to another, seems to be a very leading and important attribute of the human mind.

At a time, when a variety of ideas are present, some painful, some pleasing, and others differently featured, (unless there be any so strongly marked and stimulant as to force themselves exclusively upon us) we enjoy the easy power, and really exercise it, of moving from one to the other, of sometimes contemplating the variegated collection, and



and then of fondly fixing the attention on some favourite scene. Here the mind for a time chuses to dwell : we feel a kind of expansive energy unfold itself, and the ideal colouring becomes more glowing and expressive.---The last effect is produced by an accelerated motion communicated to the fibres then in play ; that is, the mind, in its state of attention, *reacts* upon the moving fibres, heightens their vibrations, and the mental effects are thus rendered more intense ---To a state of fixed attention soon succeeds a very sensible degree of lassitude, which still more strongly confirms my notion, that the nervous system was greatly agitated ; and this could only be effected in the manner just explained:---In *attention* therefore is displayed not only a remarkable degree of mental energy, which itself raises man far above that torpid state, you are so inclined to admire ; but also evinces the existence of a self-determining or elective power, which I conceive to be the noblest attribute of man.

The power of moving in a manner, termed *voluntary*, I admit in its most extensive signification. Indeed, every species of motion in man, external and internal, which is not  
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*immediately* produced by the application of stimuli, or by impulsion, I resolve with Dr. Whytte of Edinburgh into the action of the soul. As to voluntary muscular motion, which is now my object, it must necessarily, *as such*, proceed from the determining influence of an internal principle. Every mechanical effect, call it improperly as you please, is of the same nature, purely automatic; nor can the arbitrary distinction of voluntary and involuntary alter the internal character of human actions. As then we are interiorly convinced of some real difference in our own actions; this can only be accounted for, by ascribing some to the immediate influence of the will, whilst others are derived from other causes.---The mind, from the considerate view of the ideas before her, *judges* it proper, for instance, to raise the hand to the head; the action instantly follows, effected by a degree of motion communicated to the nerves in connexion with the muscles of the arm. How, and with what degree of force to move those fibres, hath been learnt by experience. Their first motion was, most probably, automatic, from the application of stimuli. The state of mind  
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immediately previous to this action I also with Dr. Hartley call the *will*; but *my will* is not a bare passive state; it is an active exertion of force, from whence follow the visible effects of motion, just described.

The intellectual pains and pleasures in all their combinations, and all the modes of the passions through their innumerable gradations, I conceive with you, to be the mechanical effects of vivid vibrations and of associations, abstracting always from the capacity of perceiving and attending to such emotions. Moreover, all such affections are ever ulteriorly accompanied by some one or other mental attribute, of a nature totally distinct from them.

The same observations are equally applicable to the different states of mind, termed *reflecting*, *hesitating*, *believing* or *assenting*, *dissenting*, &c.; which, as hath been already noticed, cannot possibly be resolved into the solitary *perception* of ideas. They are, undoubtedly, distinct faculties, which severally act, as their respective objects determine. To reflect is not to believe, nor is believing dissenting.

senting. They all belong to the grand principle of *reason*, which, in every regular process, as it advances from known truths to farther discoveries, displays all its subordinate forces. For a moment, Sir, return back on your own mind; there review some one series of reasoning, you have pursued to its utmost stretch. You will first perceive rising before you a few brilliant ideas, whose accord and evident relation flashes upon the mind: to them you give an easy and transient *attention*. These are instantly followed by others, which seem to germinate, as it were, from the first, but their mutual relation is not so striking, they are attended however by a few adventitious auxiliaries, which conspire to illumine the leading ideas; when again you perceive their coincidence, and another member of evidence or of truth appears. To the second a third assortment of ideas succeeds, which are still more complicated and involved in obscurity.

Here the mind begins to *hesitate*, to *analyse*, to *compare*, to *view* and *review*, to *reject*, and rapidly to perform a hundred different evolutions; till at last, a certain arrangement takes



takes place, and a farther branch of truth is perceived. The process still goes on, and at every remove, more and more difficulties arise---finally, the distant scene gradually clears up, and the object, so long and so laboriously sought for, is discovered. It may be the existence of a first moving cause; or the natural immortality of man; or it may be the appearance of one great comprehensive law, calculated to govern both the material and intellectual world.

In this one series of reasoning is discoverable, by a single glance, the whole extent and evidence of the system, I am laying before you.---In the first place appears the truth of the doctrine of the mechanical association of ideas; they are seen to rise up in the mind, in that order, and accompanied by those adventitious adjuncts and distinctive *traits*, which time, and experience, and circumstances of life, have annexed to them. In the forming of this ideal or objectual scene, the mind hath no concern; it is throughout the effect of nervous vibrations and analogous or relative associations.---In the second view are displayed the higher mental faculties, so different, in kind and mode of operation,

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from the single property of *perception*, which you and Dr. Hartley esteem exclusive by sufficient. They are the leading powers of a *rational* being, on which, his very essential character, as such, depends. Not subject to any necessitating or impulsive influence, they *freely* act from a self-determining energy, attuned to their nature, as the proper objects are presented; or *by choice* they suspend their work, and break off their operations. But they are subordinate to one another; or rather, there appears to be one leading and master power, that of the *will*, or choice, which rules and governs the whole.

When ideas, indeed, are present, they must be *perceived*; nor can this perception, by any possible exertion of the will, be ever suspended; but I am not necessitated to engage in any discursive process, let the ideas be ever so present and vivid. Ideas are, undoubtedly, essentially requisite for all mental operation; but they force not the mind mechanically after them; much less are they, as you fancy, at once the objects of thought and the thinking substance. As without a proper apparatus, it would not be in your power, to exhibit the  
surprising

surprising phenomena of the electric fluid; so neither could I pursue the most trifling chain of argumentation, without a proper choice of ideas: but as you will scarcely assert that your performing electrical experiments is *necessarily* and *unavoidably* connected with the very existence of the apparatus, though the latter be a *necessary condition*; in the same manner I insist that I am *free to reason* or not, when ideas, the essential condition to argumentation, are present to my mind.

It is at present unnecessary to enter more fully into the merits of this theory, as my only design was, succinctly to draw you out a sketch of my ideas. But I have said enough, I hope, to make my meaning clear; at least it will be sufficiently so, when the contents of this letter are joined to what has been incidentally said in other letters, particularly the VIIth. You see, Sir, how easy it would now be to extend my views, by working upon a larger and more comprehensive scale. I flatter myself you will give some small attention to the matter before you. It possesses at once all the advantages of Dr. Hartley's system, relative to the association of ideas, and

moreover secures to man those privileges, he seems, by his rank of being, to be intitled to above the rest of the creation.

I pretend not to take any glory to myself, as having made any new discovery: that would be vain indeed. The system I propose is no other than the original doctrine of Mr. Locke, exhibited, perhaps, in a more striking and less complex point of view. It is open, I know, to some objections; and all I desire is that it may pass for what it is intrinsically worth, and no more. Should it by you or others be deemed an object deserving of more attention and a fuller delineation, I may possibly, some time or other, attempt it, and make a general application of my ideas to the whole mental œconomy, regularly pursuing, as far as I may be able, the steps, which Dr. Hartley has marked out to me.---Farewell.

*April 10, 1776.*

LETTER



## L E T T E R X.

REVEREND SIR,

OPPORTUNELY enough, though you perhaps may think far otherwise, before my last letter was completely printed, accidentally fell into my hands your last volume of *Experiments on different kinds of air*. I had purposely put off the perusal of that volume to a more convenient opportunity, my head being a good deal engaged in pursuits widely different from the subject matter of those enquiries. Yet I was desirous to see one part  
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of your *preface*, in which, I had been informed, you had taken very serious notice of the reflections that had been made, relative to your notions on the *materiality of souls*. Perhaps, thought I, the Doctor hath candidly acknowledged the opinion, he hazarded on that subject, to be ill-founded, and hath therefore publicly apologized for the alarm, he unthinkingly gave to the sincere admirers of real virtue and religion; if so, what I have written on the subject must prove in a great measure useless, and I will fairly suppress my *letters on materialism*, or, at least, make a handsome excuse for the warmth of some expressions, and the personal tendency of others. With these thoughts I turned to your preface; but how great was my surprise, when instead of an apology, I beheld the same sentiment as strongly expressed as ever, and perceived that your mind was obstinately resolved to abide by the first assertion!

To make some few reflexions on that part of your preface is the design of this letter, which shall positively be my last. Do not fear, I shall copy the stale trick of rope-dancers and other performers of wonders, who announce

*one night more, and positively no longer, when they mean no such thing.* Positively then, Doctor, I again assure you, this shall be my parting discourse.

You seem not a little mortified by the report, which has gone forth to the public, so injurious to your sacerdotal character, representing you, after all your manœuvres in defence of religion, as not believing in a future state. To effect this base purpose, say you, a mutilated sentence was quoted from your *essays*; and thus was your innocent and Christian meaning most wilfully and wickedly perverted. Fie upon you, Mr. Seton; how could you thus maliciously and wantonly asperse the immaculate reputation of a man, whose coat of orthodoxy was ever esteemed of one uniform and seamless tissue!

The passage, Sir, which gave rise to the report, you deem so injurious, hath been quoted *entire* in more than a hundred different places, since its first appearance from Mr. Johnson's shop; and what will be ever a very untoward circumstance is, that Mr. Seton's inference hath constantly been drawn against you, to wit,

wit, that in your opinion the human soul, is *naturally mortal*. But this is the very doctrine, you meant in your essay to establish, this you again repeat in your preface, and this was the only assertion, with which you was charged by Mr. Seton, or by any other writer on the subject. Wherein then was your meaning so *wilfully* and *wickedly* perverted? You say indeed, that you have been "represented in an artful *advertisement* as not believing in a future state"; and of this you complain bitterly; *hinc illæ lacrymæ*. If hereby you mean to insinuate that Mr. Seton accused you of rejecting *all belief* in a future state, take care, Sir, you be not yourself guilty of, at least, a *wilful* perversion of that gentleman's meaning. He never aimed to go beyond the limits of your own assertion, (for that was quite far enough) which is, that relying on the reasons, deduced from philosophy *alone*, it is more probable that man will not survive the grave. For the truth of this I refer you to Mr. Seton's own letter, addressed to you in the London review of June, 1775. Your theological or divine faith of *future existence* was never called in question, because you declared that you had hopes of surviving the grave, derived to you from



from the *scheme of revelation*, or from a *positive constitution*, communicated by express revelation to man. As therefore his only design was to controvert and to point out the evil tendency of the first insinuation, where was the necessity of quoting more of your essay than the lines, wherein that insinuation or rather assertion was contained. Nor certainly was he blameable for laying to your charge an opinion, which you then openly promulgated, and are now determined to maintain. This is a fair representation of the matter. Review the entire essay, or only take the curtailed passage, as quoted by Mr. Seton, the inference against you, as far as any one has hitherto insinuated, must be exactly the same.—But perhaps, Sir, the case is, that Dr. Priestley hath a right to assert, what no other man may repeat, or lay to his charge, without incurring the guilt of a malicious and wicked slanderer.

“ This affair, you say, has been the occasion of much exultation among *bigots*, as a proof that freedom of thinking in matters of religion leads to infidelity ; and *unbelievers*, who have never read any but my philo-

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sophical

phical writings, consider me as one of their fraternity. To the former I shall say nothing, because it would avail nothing."

It would please me much to hear *your own* definition of the word *bigotry*; because I think it would be curious, and probably be infinitely more extensive in its application, than was ever before imagined. Should you confine it to those, who declare against freedom of thinking, or rather free enquiry in matters of religion, you would not, I fancy, be opposed by the rational part of believers. The *rationale* of religion not only admits of, but even requires a free and candid discussion of the subject; which must always tend to the discovery and confirmation of truth, and to the detection and destruction of error and falsehood. But a degree of deference to the sentiments and even prejudices of others should be ever preserved; nor can a man be too diffident of the workings of his own reason, or too moderate and circumspect in what he delivers out to the multitude. "*Quiconque* (says a virtuous foreigner, who is no bigot) *s'intéresse plus au bonheur des hommes qu'à sa propre gloire, ne se hasardera pas à dire son avis*  
*sur*

*sur des préjugés, qui contribuent à faire éclore le germe de la vertu, et à répandre le repos et la félicité parmi ses semblables."*

Your religious address to *unbelievers*, particularly foreigners, who have kindly, as you observe, admitted you into their fraternity, deserves some notice. Of these you entertain better hopes than of bigots. "As they will agree with me in the opinion of the *natural mortality of the soul*, which is agreeable to every appearance in nature, say you, it greatly concerns *us* to consider, &c." *i. e.* whether the deity has not by some *positive revelation* pointed out an *hereafter* to man.---Most undoubtedly, if they have adopted your opinion, it nearly concerns them to look out for some security, some other proof of existence in a world to come. But should they remain obstinate in their infidel scheme, and moreover pay such deference to your sentiments, as to declare for materialism; then, Doctor, what will be their fate?---you are, however, much deceived if you imagine that all foreign infidels have adopted your opinion. I could name some, whose religious faith is much less than a grain of mustard seed, who are

still warm maintainers of the soul's natural immortality: such as that wild Orang outang J. J. Rousseau of Geneva; and the famous Berlin Jew Moses Mandels-Sohn; who have both expressly written in defence of that doctrine. Indeed, I know not of any, who are *eminent* in the literary world, that have publicly, at least, espoused your sentiment. You are, therefore, I suspect, *plus isolé* in your opinion, than you please to flatter yourself.

Where this is not the case; wherever you have found an unbelieving and *material* brother, him it behoves seriously to consider; and if your arguments, in defence of *revelation*, are able to draw him from his infidel state, I will be the last to controvert the validity and strength of your reasoning; nor will I ever attempt to shew how little it appears to me calculated to effect that benevolent and charitable purpose.---But as you add, that "it argues extreme narrowness of mind, unworthy of the spirit of Philosophy, not to extend our views and inquiries beyond the circle of those objects, about which *natural philosophy* is conversant, which terminate in gain-



gaining a knowledge of the *visible system* of nature;" why do you not, as a *metaphysician*, aim to rise above this *visible world of matter*, where you may discover the existence and reality of other beings, whose ethereal forms cannot be confined in a tub of water, or a bason of quick-silver; nor be extracted by friction from a globe of glass; nor infine be analysed by all the powers of chymistry?

In the line immediately adjoined to the last cited passage you declare, that the contrary doctrine to your own, that is, the doctrine of *natural immortality*, "has no countenance from the scriptures."---I am not in the least disposed to pervert your meaning ---I am sensible of the enormity of the crime ---but I should be exceedingly glad to know whether those last words have any meaning at all. For if you mean to say that the doctrine of *natural immortality* is not itself, as such, contained in the scriptures; you are, to be sure, in the right, because that doctrine, as the pure result of reason, most evidently is not a *revealed* truth. But if, as the words themselves express it, this doctrine hath really

really *no countenance from the scriptures* ; then is the future existence of man not only false in philosophy, as you insist, but likewise in its theological acceptation : what then becomes of that part of the scheme of revelation, on which you rest all your hopes of immortality ? ---but such slips of the pen, ( as has been already urged in justification of a similar oversight ) are perhaps “ venial, and easily excusable in the rapidity of composition,” particularly of so hasty a composer as Dr. Priestley.

“ The opinion ( you add to a note subfixed to the page before me ) of the *natural immortality of the soul*, had its origin in the heathen philosophy ; and having, with other Pagan notions, insinuated itself into Christianity ( which has been miserably depraved by this means ) has been the great support of the popish doctrines of *purgatory*, and the *worship of the dead*.” ---That a writer, who plumes himself on the character of singular candor and sincerity could have written a paragraph so replete with falsehood and wilful misrepresentation, is not, at least a common phe-

phenomenon, in the history of the human mind!

If the opinion, Sir, of *natural immortality* had its origin in the heathen philosophy; then certainly was that opinion a *common* point of belief in the ancient world, which however, your friends, since the commencement of this dispute, have peremptorily denied. And again, if it arose from that quarter; then you must allow it to have been discovered by *unassisted* reason, and consequently this doctrine itself cannot be contrary to, and out of the utmost reach of that faculty, which you pretend is the case.

Your second assertion, that that opinion, with other Pagan notions, insinuated itself into Christianity, is no less arbitrary than the former. By Christianity, I suppose you mean that system of religious belief, which is founded on the positive revelation of the Deity. Of this system one principal article, according to your own creed, is *man's future existence*. Why then,  
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on this supposition, not rather assert that the opinion of *natural immortality* grew insensibly, in the course of many years, out of the revealed dogma, agreeably to many similar events in the history of mankind, than assign a cause to its origin, the reality of which can never be proved? Moreover, where is the probability that Christians of any age, even the most ignorant, should have been inclined to admit a heathenish opinion, contrary to the testimony of their senses, as you maintain, whilst their minds at the same time were fully impressed with the belief, as taught by express revelation? But granting that the notion was by the means you assign, imported into Christianity, pray, how could *it* possibly have contributed to deprave that religious system; if the revealed tenet itself of *immortality* does not necessarily tend to corrupt the human heart or the Christian institution, which, I think, you will hardly assert; can it by any means happen, that the same belief, when supposed to spring from a second source, should produce such pernicious effects?----I blush, Sir, to suppose *you* capable



pable of such flimsy reasoning; but the fact stands recorded against you, and your philosophy must bear you through, as well as it may. It may, perhaps, be *glorious* to dissent from the crowd; but it is not, I am sure, *rational*, when more plausible reasons for such conduct, cannot be adduced.

“That notion has been the great support of the popish doctrines of *purgatory*, and the *worship of the dead*:” therefore, most certainly, it came from the devil, or what is worse, was invented by one of the antichrists of papal Rome.---By *purgatory*, (for I also understand something of the popish *scheme* of faith) is meant a place of *expiatory punishment*. It is grounded on the belief of the *soul's immortality*, joined to a notion that nothing defiled can enter into heaven. But why you should fancy that this doctrine rests solely on the opinion of *natural immortality*, when a more adequate basis may be discovered, to wit, an express revelation, which both you and the papists (what a monstrous coalition!) maintain, is ludicrous enough. Besides, what possible support can that Romish tenet derive from the *pagan*

sentiment in question? Just with equal propriety might you assert that the doctrines of *hell* and *heaven* (only that they are not exclusively popish) are sprung from, or at least founded on the same opinion.

*En passant*, Doctor, give me leave to ask, what objection you can *consistently* have to the doctrine of purgatory; you who, I suppose, with Dr Hartley and others, have adopted the notion of an *universal restoration*, to take place, some time or other? That notion annihilates the belief of a place of *eternal* punishment, and consequently establishes a *purgatory*, upon a more extensive and extraordinary plan indeed, than is that of Rome, but still a purgatory it most certainly is. And if you will insist that the popish tenet rests on the sentiment of *natural immortality*, by what *finesse* of logic will you be able to prove that your own *purgatory* is not derived or upheld by the same opinion?

What you would mean to say by the *worship of the dead*, another popish doctrine, you assert, supported by the same opinion, is

to me quite a mystery. I have been a good deal connected with Roman Catholics, both at home and abroad, but I never understood that *worshipping the dead* was a part of their religion.

What opinion, think you, will your foreign friends, Father Beccaria and others, form of your candour and simplicity of heart, when they shall read this curious note?---But I beg your pardon, Sir; your friends, on the other side of the water, are, I suppose, mostly of the infidel cast; you would not, I dare say, be connected with *bigots* of any nation. Seriously, to meet with such stale and childish reflexions in a work, as you tell us, addressed to philosophers, gives me a very poor opinion of your ingenuousness and liberal turn of mind. And with what face can you continue to brand others with the odious appellation of *bigot* and of enemies to free enquiry, whilst you still retain, rankling within your own breast, those same ridiculous prejudices against the Roman, and perhaps other churches, which you first imbibed within the walls of your nursery?

Here I shall drop the subject. One request I have to make, which is, that as you think it deserves your attention, you will take a serious review of your ideas, before you again publicly appear in your metaphysical department. My request is moderate; it cannot displease the man, who pretends not to infallibility.

The Hartleyan doctrine is an object of the greatest moment: its influence will be felt, as far as the widest spread of science extends, because its application is general. But not only the philosopher, the divine also, and the magistrate are deeply concerned, for by it will the whole system of moral and civil life be sensibly affected. Is it not then the duty of every man to take the alarm, to examine, and scrupulously analyse the principles, and even the most distant consequences of a system, which, if ever generally adopted, will so generally, and in my opinion, so fatally operate? I pointed out some of its defects, and I started some objections; but much more remains to be done. Do you, Sir, take care, lest under  
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HARTLEY'S THEORY, &c. 225

the specious shew of being serviceable, you be really instrumental in propagating a doctrine, whereby the cause of *truth*, *virtue*, and *religion* may be severely injured.---

Farewell.

August 1, 1776.

F I N I S.



# E R R A T A

P.	86	l.	7	for	be	read	because.
p.	107	l.	23	—	disjointed	—	disjoined.
p.	110	i.	11	—	drawn	—	draw.
p.	111	l.	13	—	effect	—	affect
p.	112	l.	4	—	agreed	—	great
p.	113	l.	9	—	quandoque	—	quandoque
p.	123	l.	11	—	manifest	—	manifold
p.	178	l.	13	—	untraced	—	contrasted
p.	183	l.	12	—	contradiction	—	contradistinction.
p.	Ibid.	l.	23	—	fall	—	follow
p.	190	l.	10	after	put	—	it

17  
d  
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t

x

x